

THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

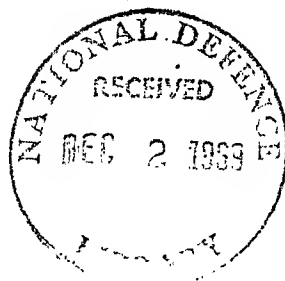


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# THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

BY

FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT WOLSELEY

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*WITH PHOTOGRAVURE PORTRAIT AND PLANS*

SECOND IMPRESSION

VOLUME I

TORONTO

THE BOOK SUPPLY COMPANY  
LIMITED

1904

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M2

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## PREFACE

IN the following pages I have tried to record the noble actions I have witnessed, and to describe the men I have been associated with. I have set down nought in malice, and therefore beg my readers to forgive what may be my prejudices.

WOLSELEY, F.M.

FARM HOUSE

GLYNDE

*September 14, 1903*



TO  
THE RT. HONOURABLE  
LORD MOUNT-STEPHEN.

I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES OF VARIED EXPERIENCES  
TO YOU WHO FOR FORTY YEARS HAVE  
GIVEN ME YOUR UNVARYING  
FRIENDSHIP.



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FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT WOLSELEY, G.C.M.G. .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
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## CHAPTER I

### Early Years—Join at Chatham—Voyage to India 1833-52

**I** WAS reared in the belief that my family was one of the very few that could trace its direct descent in the male line from ancestors who had lived before "the Conquest" on lands still held by us, their descendants. According to an unwritten legend, accepted of course by us as gospel, we were given those lands—which subsequently became the Manor of Ousley, then Wlslia, and now Wolseley—by King Edgar for exterminating the wolves on Cannock Chase. The truth of this legend is strengthened by the fact that from time immemorial we have borne on our arms the Talbot Dog—the wolfhound of the Saxons—and that the wolf's head has always been our crest, and *Homo homini lupus* our motto.

A man's ancestors, like his children, though interesting personalities to himself, have no charm for others. My reader will, therefore, be glad to know that I have no intention of writing a family history. I have only mentioned this much on the subject because the fact of knowing that I had inherited a very old name had a marked influence upon my boyhood and early life. It was a spur to the boundless ambition that filled my brain in youth, and it has been an active factor in the events of my subsequent career.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Leaving my forefathers to their long sleep in Colwich churchyard, I come to my immediate progenitors. My great-grandfather, Colonel Sir Richard Wolseley, Bart., the younger brother of Sir Charles Wolseley, Bart., of Wolseley, Stafford, went to Ireland about the beginning of George II's reign. I believe he was induced to do so by the hope of being able to make good a claim to the confiscated Irish lands which had been allotted and partly made over to his uncle, Brigadier-General the Right Hon. William Wolseley, by King William III, for services rendered during that monarch's wars in Ireland. He had gone with General Percy Kirke to Ireland in 1689, had raised some troops in Inniskillen, his own regiment—levied there—being called "Wolseley's Horse."<sup>1</sup> He saw much service at that time in Ireland, having commanded at the hard-fought battle of Newtown-Butler, and subsequently defeated the Duke of Berwick at Cavan. He took part in the Duke of Schomberg's disastrous campaign of 1689, and fought at the Boyne. He was all through the operations by which King William effected the subjugation of Ireland, dying in Dublin in 1697 as Master-General of the Ordnance and one of the Lords Justices then ruling that turbulent island. I do not mean to describe here the events of his life, but he was a remarkable man, and had served King William well. He crossed the Boyne at that monarch's side, and according to family tradition, when William's horse was bogged in the river, as history relates, he dismounted and gave the king his horse, which was a black one. The pictures, which usually represent the king riding a white charger when crossing that river, must be inaccurate if our family legend be true. However, our

<sup>1</sup> This regiment is now the 6th or Inniskilling Dragoons.

## EARLY YEARS

Brigadier always considered himself very badly used by the King, for whilst all his Dutch generals and other personal friends were given large grants, mostly of Irish lands robbed from the Catholic Irish gentry, the land grant promised, and at one time allotted, to the English Brigadier of Horse was never legally made over to him. I believe, however, that some of the lands in Carlow and Wexford, which my great-grandfather subsequently obtained in Ireland, were part of those originally intended for, or given to, this fighting uncle of his.

Shortly after my great-grandfather's arrival in Ireland, he was made an Irish baronet, and he married a daughter of Sir Thomas Molyneux, Bart. He settled in the county of Carlow, at the village of Tullow, where he built a house, and, following the fashion of the Irish families around him, called it "Mount Wolseley." There my grandfather and his two brothers were born, the first of the family entitled to wear the shamrock on St. Patrick's Day. My grandfather and both his brothers were in the Royal Dragoons, in which regiment he served throughout the Seven Years' War in Germany. As a child I took the deepest interest in the stories I was told of his gallant deeds, and remember how much impressed I was by the fact that upon one occasion he had not changed his clothes for a fortnight, at the end of which his big jack-boots had to be cut from his swollen feet.

Upon the close of the war he returned home with his regiment, and when marching through Wiltshire he met a pretty Miss Hulbert, fell in love, and married her. She was the orphan daughter of a Huguenot father, who had settled in the west of England as a cloth manufacturer. Her fortune was small, but her fecundity was prodigious. Alas !

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

she presented my impetuous grandfather with fifteen children.

A very good man, but not wise in worldly affairs, he soon awoke to the imprudence of his marriage. He, a younger son, could no longer afford to amuse himself as a captain of Dragoons, but must find some other settled and less expensive occupation. An uncle by marriage, Dr. Garnet, Bishop of Clogher, had settled in Ireland to become a prelate in the Irish Church. He now offered my grandfather an Irish living if he would enter the Church, and the offer was accepted. This change of title from captain to reverend was not difficult, as when young he had taken a degree in Trinity College, Dublin. He died in 1800 as Rector of Tullycorbet in the north of Ireland.

In honour of the bishop my father was called Garnet, and in due time I was also given that name "at my baptism."

During the rebellion of 1798, our house at Tullow was attacked and burned by the Irish. In some amusing letters to her people in England, my grandmother describes the sudden approach of the rebels and the panic which ensued, for they seemed bent upon ridding Ireland of at least one family of the hated Saxon settlers. Every one ran, some on horseback, others in any wheeled conveyance they could secure, all making for Carlow, about nine miles off, where there was a small English garrison. A very plain aunt, to whom as a boy I was much attached, was forgotten in the hurry and confusion. Finding herself left behind she set out on foot, but being soon overtaken by a Yeomanry trooper, he kindly took her up behind him. She did very well thus until about half-way to Carlow, when, unfortunately for her, they overtook a very pretty girl out of breath and much frightened. The trooper said

## EARLY YEARS

she was his cousin, and insisted upon my ugly aunt giving up her place behind him to his handsome kinswoman. My poor aunt had to finish her flight on foot.

The rebels were not content with burning our house, but, being short of ammunition, they stripped the Church spire of its lead, and also smelted into bullets the leaden coffin in which my great-grandfather had been recently buried.

My father and his younger brother entered the Army. Both served for many years in the King's Own Borderers, then quartered in the West Indies. When other regiments were engaged in winning fame under Wellington in Spain theirs was left to fight the French in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and other French West India Islands. I remember many a story about these encounters with the French, but will not inflict them upon my reader. The life led by our troops in the West Indies then was odious in every sense, and my father hated it. The officers, as well as the men, drank hard and often quarrelled over their wine. Duels were common occurrences, but, strange to say, they seldom ended fatally. When either my father or uncle was so "engaged in the morning," and it was often, one was always the other's second.

My father was by no means clever, and having entered the Army when extremely young, he was badly educated, a misfortune he never ceased to deplore. I often heard my mother say that my father spent his fourteenth birthday as an ensign in Gibraltar. He was very poor and very proud. Nothing could have induced him to do a mean action of any sort. Hot-tempered, and perhaps prone to quarrel, he was chivalry itself in thought, word and action. Full of charity, he felt much for the Irish poor, with whose misery, in those days of high rents and high prices, he had

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the most real sympathy. Very punctilious in manner and bearing, and particular about his clothes and general appearance, he looked a soldier all over. He was a very religious man in later years, and a strong Protestant, as all the family had been since the Reformation, until his cousin, the English Baronet, Sir Charles Wolseley—the curious, clever, half-cracked Chartist, who had taken part in the assault of the Bastille—joined the Church of Rome.

My father married late in life, my mother being twenty-five years his junior. She was the daughter of William Smith, Esq., of Golden Bridge House, County Dublin, and another daughter married my father's cousin, Sir Richard Wolseley, Bart. My maternal grandfather was a typical spendthrift Irish landlord, who lived recklessly beyond his means. His great-grandfather, a Mr. de Herries, had fled from England during the plague in Charles II's reign, and, having bought the Golden Bridge property, built himself a house upon it. Why he assumed the homely name of Smith, I know not. Most of us have acquaintances who have sunk the patronymic "Smith" into what sounded more imposing. But here was a well-born old gentleman who deliberately did the reverse.

My father sold out as a major, shortly after his marriage, and rented Golden Bridge House from his father-in-law, who had settled in England. There I was born, June 4, 1833, just 101 years after my paternal grandfather had come into the world at Mount Wolseley, in the County of Carlow. I was thus the third generation that had been born in Ireland. It is always pleasant to me to remember that the year of my birth was that in which we abolished "that execrable sum of all villanies, commonly called the 'Slave Trade.'"

Golden Bridge House was a red brick mansion of the

## EARLY YEARS

King William or early Queen Anne period. Like most of the old country houses near Dublin, it is now a convent, and a dirty slum has grown up in and around what was once its undulating and well-watered little park.

I should like to record here my earliest recollections of my mother, but it is not easy to describe one so loved, and round whose memory there clings, as a halo, the holiest and loftiest of my childish thoughts and aspirations. As a boy I always thought hers the fairest and sweetest face in the world, and she still looms before my memory a beautiful, gracious, tall and stately woman, full of love and tenderness for all about her. Her smile was most fascinating, and the poor and sorrowful of heart never came to her in vain for help and sympathy. Her white, well-shaped teeth, very regular features, dark, nearly black, hair, and an almost southern complexion, made her more Spanish than English in appearance. She was very clever, capable, tactful, of sound judgment, and as a girl had read much. In my daily walks with her, when a boy, I drank in from her teaching much that I have never forgotten. Her religion—devoid of everything approaching to priest-craft—was the simplest Bible form of worship. She was indeed one of the pure in heart, of whom, we are told, “they shall see God.”

I will pass rapidly over the story of my boyhood, for I know by the memoirs of others how uninteresting are the tales of early youth. As a boy, I was very active, ran and jumped well, was fond of boxing, single-stick, rowing, shooting, and all out-of-door amusements. I read much, and crammed my head with Hume's *History of England*, Alison's *History of Europe*, and Napier's *Peninsula War*. Devoted to mathematics, I disliked the “Classics,” especi-



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ally Greek, and always loathed the ancient gods of Greece, and all the absurd myths and stories about them. My exact and mathematical mind revolted against the unreal nonsense taught me as the history of these mean and contemptible deities, about most of whom there was nothing good, wholesome, or manly. Horace and Juvenal, however, amused, and Virgil's description of the games excited me. Later on I read Caesar for my Army examination; his commentaries and *Xenophon's Anabasis* were the only classics I ever thoroughly enjoyed. I was taught drawing, the use of the pocket sextant and prismatic compass, and I devoured every work on the theory and practice of war that I could beg, borrow, or afford to buy.

My first Commission was dated March 12, 1852, when I was still under nineteen years of age, and I joined the provisional battalion at Chatham early in June, as an ensign in the 80th, now called by its old official title, the South Staffordshire Regiment. This Chatham battalion consisted of the dépôts of all the Queen's regiments serving in India, and when I joined it, the barracks were overcrowded with boy recruits, chiefly obtained from Ireland, and of ensigns of all ages waiting for conveyance to India. All drafts for Indian regiments then went round the Cape of Good Hope in sailing ships, most of which belonged to the firms of either Green or Wygram, the two great ship-owners then trading with the East. Most of us young ensigns, knowing we had but a very short time longer to be in England, and might not return for many long years, embarked in all the follies, reckless pleasures and so-called amusements our limited means could provide. Want of money saved many of us, for nine out of ten of us were very poor, and looked forward to an Indian career where high

## JOIN AT CHATHAM

pay enabled the infantry officer to live without assistance from home.

Like all other ensigns, I was allotted one very small room as my quarters. It had the usual barrack table and two chairs; the rest of the furniture, as is usual in all barracks, I had to find myself. These officers' quarters were very old and abominably bad. An old great-uncle of mine told me he had towards the end of the previous century occupied a room in the house where I was lodged. It was, he said, even then generally understood that these quarters were so bad that they had been condemned as unfit for use. But throughout most of my service it would seem to have been generally assumed that any house was good enough for our officers. It was then a common belief that the barrack master and his old sergeants made a good thing out of the charges levied upon young officers as barrack damages. A cracked pane of glass was a small silver mine to these men. Fifty ensigns may have occupied the quarter with this cracked pane in it, and all had to pay for a new one. After I had embarked, the barrack sergeant presented me with his bill, one item being for a latch key, which I had then about me. In my innocence I proffered the key, and asked him to erase the item. He positively refused; I paid the several shillings demanded, its outside value being, I should say, one, and foolishly imagined I had scored one against the harpy by throwing the key into the river.

This provisional battalion was then commanded by a colonel with rough, bad manners, and very much disliked by all, old and young, who had the misfortune to serve under him. But his task was a hard one I fully admit, and I can now make allowance for his bad temper, though not for his

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brutality of manner. I was only about ten days or a fortnight at Chatham before embarkation for India, so I had personally little to do with him, but I found him, whenever I did have to approach him, wanting in all that kindness and consideration which marks a gentleman in dealing with boys of eighteen or nineteen. None of us were, I should say, over that age, and a little advice given in a fatherly tone would have had great influence with most of us. I confess we were an uninteresting lot. The great bulk of the young men who then usually went to India were socially not of a high order. Of course, though very poor, many were the sons of old officers of good families, whose poverty compelled their sons to serve in India, if serve they would in the Army. But the great bulk of those I met at Chatham, and afterwards in India and Burmah, at that time, struck me, I remember, as wanting in good breeding, and all seemed badly educated. For many and many a year this depôt had been similarly emptied each summer of its beardless ensigns to fill up the annual vacancies in the Queen's regiments serving in India. It was curious and interesting, though sad, to follow their military careers. They were the class of men who, for the previous half century, had led the soldiers of the English Army in all the Indian battles from the days of Arthur Wellesley to those of Colin Campbell. I need scarcely add that it was upon the British regiments the brunt of the fighting fell in all the Indian wars of that period.

It is sad to think of the many who, from want of energy and of grit, and above all things of that healthy ambition which requires those qualities for its foundation, sank beneath the enervating influences of cantonment life. Some degenerated quickly into mere consumers of beer and

## LIFE AT CHATHAM

brandy, without even that British recklessness which in a measure makes the sportsman. Others, in pursuit of game and adventure, found vent for their superabundant activity by wanderings into unknown jungles and amidst snowy mountains. Amongst these latter many became our best and most daring and most resourceful soldiers. Their sporting tastes but added to their keen sense of regimental duties. Of these a small proportion, taking their profession seriously, studied hard at all military sciences, and spent many of those deadly midday hours of the Indian summers in reading military history and the lives of great commanders. Happy, indeed, is the young officer who so loves his work as to find in such literature a high form of pleasure. A few of that stamp developed into able leaders, but they were men who would have achieved greatness in any walk of life. However, as I look back at my early contemporaries, and class them with hundreds of other young officers, both before and after them, I feel a pride in thinking and knowing that one and all, good and bad together, did England righteous service. Whenever the occasion required it, they fought hard for her honour, and in her interests led their men straight in siege and battle. Although all did not put out their talents to good interest, they loved their country, and never shrank from death when her interests required them to face it.

At the Pongo Mess, as it was commonly called, I know not why, the captains—they were looked upon as elderly persons by us boys—sat at the end of the table furthest from the door, so as to drink their port and sherry as far removed as possible from the noisy ensigns who thronged the lower end. They seldom spoke to us, and we looked upon them with feelings approaching awe. This was entirely different

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from the practice of all regimental messes, but at Chatham we were nobody's children, and no one took any trouble with us. There was none of the controlling influence over us that the seniors in all regiments exercise over their young brother officers, for at that dépôt mess no comradeship existed. With one whom I met there, Pemberton of the Royal Rifles, now a retired general, I have kept up a close and a happy intimacy during life. He is now one of my oldest and best friends. A gallant soldier, a generous and affectionate comrade, without guile, simple and honest in heart, he is a gentleman in thought, word and deed. May his days be long.

The older officers interested me much, for a large number wore medals, won in Indian campaigns, each and all of which had pushed our frontier further north towards the great mountains, the natural boundaries of Hindostan. One of these officers still wore his arm in a sling from a bad wound received at Chillianwallah, that unfortunate battle where British courage was a more distinguishing feature than either the strategical or tactical ability of the general commanding. This disabled officer told me that on the evening of that battle the dead bodies of thirteen of his brother officers lay on the dining table in their mess tent. Well, although "some one blundered," those men died like gentlemen, and I remember well how much more I was inspired with fighting ardour than depressed by this story. There was an heroic grandeur about it that recalled to memory my badly learned stories of fights before Troy. I was barbarian enough to feel more enthusiastic over this wounded officer's matter-of-fact narrative than I ever felt when poring over Homer's heroic verse, trying to learn, and doing my best to appreciate it. I confess that this

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Englishman, with his arm in a sling, was to me a far greater hero than either Hector or Achilles. But from boyhood to this day, I have always had the poorest opinions of Homer's heroes as fighting men. My servant, Private Andrews, of I Company 90th Light Infantry, was in every way worth a dozen of them, though he never found a great poet to record his deeds. But he died for his country.

The relation of all actual deeds of daring has always had for me an intense interest. As a boy they made my pulse throb quickly when I read them in *Peter Parley's Annual*, and they excite me still in no small degree. I always loved to hear old soldiers talk about their daring comrades in long forgotten fights. I still remember many of their exciting stories. Here is one about Meeanee, the battle fought by Sir Charles Napier, which gave us the province of Scind. It may be truthfully said that it was won by the 22nd, now known by its older title of the Cheshire Regiment. It was the only British regiment present. Its colonel was then a fighting gentleman from Tipperary, a man of the old school, who knew little of strategy, and whose tactics consisted in going straight for his enemy to knock him down. He was afterwards well known at Aldershot as Sir John Pennyfather, "the swearing general." The day after he assumed command at Aldershot, an officer quartered there was asked in a London club if Sir John had yet appeared there. The reply was: "Yes, he swore himself in yesterday." He seldom expressed any decided opinion without the accompaniment of an oath, although the real kindness of his disposition—well known to his soldiers—was on a par with his daring courage. His regiment was his home, and all ranks in it were to him his children. It had lost heavily in the battle, and as he

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looked upon its thinned ranks that evening, he fairly broke down. Intensely proud of what they had done that day, and with tears coursing down his cheeks, he said to them : " I can't make you a speech, my lads, but by ———, you are all gentlemen."

Never, I believe, in classical or in modern times, has a more effective speech been made by a leader to his men after a battle. It was just the praise they valued most, for they believed it to be the highest compliment any man could pay them. They felt it ; they were proud of it. Unpremeditated, it went straight from the colonel's feeling heart to the hearts of the gallant soldiers he commanded.

At the time I write of, all the troopships and most of the East-Indianmen sailed from Sheerness. During the last week of June, 1852, I embarked in the *Maidstone*, a full-rigged ship of between 800 and 900 tons, quite a respectable sized vessel in those days. She belonged to the Wygram Company of shipowners, the rival of the still greater company of Green and Co. Captain Peter Roe commanded her, an experienced and able sailor, and socially a very superior man in all respects. He kept up the reputation of the old class of vessels known as East-Indiamen, a class then fast disappearing, and entirely unknown to the present generation. His officers were men of good manners, and the ship's crew were all good British sailors, except the boatswain, a first-rate man all round, who was either a Dane or a Swede, I forget which. The carpenter was a character—a Highlander—who knew the history of Scotland well, and who could have passed with credit an examination in Sir Walter Scott's novels. He might have been the original " Chips " of Captain Marryat's manly stories.

The anchor weighed ; we were towed down the river until

## EMBARK FOR INDIA

our sails could be of use, and we were under all sail before nightfall. We made good weather throughout the following day, and I can well remember my thoughts and feelings as I gazed earnestly upon the green fields and white cliffs of dear old England, not knowing whether I should ever see them again, or at least when I might do so. How I thought of my mother, all through life my first care. Poets imagine that men say to themselves the night after a battle : " What will they say in England ? " I believe that by far the largest proportion of men think of their mother, and of her valued love for them. At least so it has been all through my life. But then I had the best and dearest of mothers ; happily, most men think that also.

I had never been a good sailor, so I kept my hammock, or rather swinging cot, for a couple of days, and then struggled on deck. It was my apprenticeship to the sea, and I have scarcely ever been seasick since. In those days, all passengers had to furnish their own cabins. I had another ensign as my cabin companion, Mr. Grahame, 22nd Regiment, whose younger brother subsequently joined what I have always called " My Regiment," the 90th Light Infantry, as it was the only one with whose head quarters I ever did duty. He spoke with a Scotch accent, and had all the proverbial qualities of his race. His brother, who was killed at the Alum Bagh, was one of the very bravest men I ever knew : I shall refer to him later on. Our cabin was spacious enough, with a large square port-hole, which in ordinary weather, when we were on the lee side, we were usually able to keep wide open. The first warning we generally had of bad weather coming on was the appearance of the fine old Scotch carpenter to screw up this port. When so fastened down in the tropics the



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cabin became unbearable, and I for one could not sleep below, for the cockroaches flying about and settling at times on nose or face made me bound out of my cot to hurry up into the delightful air and quiet of a night at sea when near the Line.

We had on board about 150 soldiers, and some women and children belonging to them. There were a few old sergeants and a small number of old privates who, having been invalided from India and restored to health at home, were returning—without any doubt to die with their regiments in the Bengal Presidency. The man allotted to me as a servant was one of these. He was an Irishman of the 10th Foot, and upon my asking him why he had been sent home, said he was invalided from Die-sentary. I said inquiringly, "from where?" He repeated that he had nearly died from Die-sentary in India. His meaning then dawned upon me, and I realized how much accentuation had to do with our language. How difficult it must be for a foreigner to understand us, when a misplaced accent in our pronunciation of a well-known disease renders its meaning unintelligible amongst ourselves.

Our commanding officer on board was a tiny little man, an old lieutenant in the Lincolnshire Regiment, who had taken part in the Sutlej campaign of 1846. At the head of that regiment was an Irishman named Franks—well known in the Army then as a terrible martinet—who was hated by all ranks under him. No officer in the regiment would accept the position of adjutant, so harsh was he even to his officers. A lieutenant was at last found in another regiment who was willing to accept it, namely young Henry Havelock, the most daring of men in action and full of military ability. He often told me stories about the strange

## VOYAGE TO INDIA 1852

colonel he had then to serve with—a man as rigorous and uncompromising towards his officers as he was in all his dealings with the rank and file. Just before the battalion moved into action the day of Sobraon, the colonel said to his men: “I understand you mean to shoot me to-day, but I want you to do me a favour; don’t kill me until the battle is well over.” It was quite true; they had meant to shoot him, but the coolness with which the request was made, the soldier-like spirit and indifference to death it denoted, the daring and contempt for danger he displayed throughout the battle, so won their admiration that they allowed him to live. But history tells us he never reformed.

Life on board an East-Indiaman, before steamers went round the Cape, or a railway had been made across the Isthmus of Suez, has been often told by more graphic pens than mine. It was a wearisome monotony usually spent, I think it is Macaulay who says so, in making love and in quarrelling. Our doctor was a Hercules in strength, and a sad story was told of him which, in its main features was, I believe, true. He, with his wife and child, were upset from a boat in some river; he took one under each arm, and swam vigorously for shore. Becoming exhausted, he had to drop his child to save his wife, whom he brought safely to land.

We had but few books, and they were of little count, but it was amusing to watch the idiosyncrasies and study the characters of those around one. The captain held himself very much aloof from all of us, but if I had had to pick out the man who had most in him and was made of the best stuff, I should have selected him. There seemed to be so much reserve force about him that he was a problem

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

to me, little as ever he deigned to say to me during the voyage. However, I was very independent of others, for I pored over a Hindostani grammar and phrase book, and without any Moonshee to guide me, tried to read fables and little stories in what was then known in India as "the vernacular." This with drawing, keeping an elaborate journal, and revelling in the few military works I possessed, enabled me to get through the long days of sunlight more easily, I think, than my companions. I roamed about the yards and upper rigging, the main top in fair weather being a favourite reading place. I have sat there for hours with a book in my hands, and many were the visits I paid to the main truck. The most trying thing for the nerves, however, was to go out along the bowsprit and then back on board, hand-over-hand along the bobstay under the dolphin-striker.

This running about the rigging supplied me with the bodily exercise that is so necessary for muscular vigour, and was an outlet for my pent-up energy, which, on board ship, required a safety-valve to prevent an explosion. When approaching squalls led to the order, "all hands," or even "watch shorten sail," I usually took my place with the reefers on the mizzen-top-sail-yard, and enjoyed the fun and excitement immensely. To lean far over the yard and pick up the reef points whilst the luffed sail flapped violently about your legs with the seeming object of striking your feet from the rope you stood on, was pleasantly exciting. But though I was the only passenger who thus amused himself, the daily occupations of all were more muscular than mental.

We sighted Madeira and some small islands and rocks during our voyage to the Cape, all of which I sketched. Their outlines with a bright sky above and a very blue sea

## CROSSING THE LINE

beneath gave us something to talk about, and provided me with objects for my sketch book.

We had some of the amusing ceremonies then usual when crossing the Line, but in a modified form, for I believe there was a rule against their being played at on board troopships with all their old-fashioned formalities. The week or fortnight during which sailing-ships were usually becalmed in the neighbourhood was then about the most tedious and temper-trying period of a voyage to India. For hours, sometimes for days, your vessel drifted about, with flapping sails and not enough wind to enable you to keep your course. The rubbish thrown overboard from the ship's galley after breakfast floated about your taffrail all day, and you were lucky if you did not see it still there next morning. There were generally at this season of the year other Eastern-bound ships in sight in those latitudes. Sailors never liked to get their vessels too close then, for on this calm and, as it were, painted sea, when they approached very near one another, they were apt to close in, being drawn together by the affinity which bodies of loose matter have one for the other when no counteracting force is there to keep them apart. We often signalled to other ships situated as we were, but we never communicated by boat, as we were told was not an uncommon practice under like circumstances in those latitudes. Sometimes boats were had out, I understood, to tow the becalmed ships, but we patiently awaited the very light winds which every now and then enabled us to keep steerage way on the good ship. Shark catching afforded us occupation and subject for conversation, but altogether it was a dull time, and taking us all in all, we were a dull, uninteresting lot on board the old *Maidstone*.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

The one ardent hope that cheered me through the long monotonous days spent amidst uncongenial companions on board this ship was that I might reach Burmah in time to see some active service there. I thought then, I think still, that this was a manly, elevating aspiration, for surely war with all its horrors exercises a healthy influence on all classes of society. There is an epoch in the history of nations when man becomes so absorbed in the pursuit of wealth and the enjoyment of ease, that the drastic medicine of war can alone revive its former manliness and restore the virility that had made its sons renowned. Storms, we are told, drive away noxious vapours injurious to bodily health. War may cause havoc, but the ruins of Thebes, of Carthage, of Greece and of Rome, remind us that unmanly vices killed the races which built these once famous and powerful cities. It is man's wrong-doing, not his desire for glory, which destroys his efforts to be great. Conquering races may be inferior as poets, artists and writers to those they subdue, but the latter would not have been subdued had they retained the manly virtues that made their forebears great. National greatness can only continue to thrive whilst it has fighting strength for its foundation. War, though it may mean a hard struggle for national existence, is the greatest purifier to the race or nation that has reached the verge of over-refinement, of excessive civilization. That verge is the edge of a precipice at whose base lie millions in every form and phase of mental and bodily decrepitude.

A favourable voyage of fifty days, devoid of all striking incidents, found us at last anchored in Table Bay, the port of Cape Town. That capital of our South African Colonies was then a very small but most picturesque place, compared with the very dusty smoky city of to-day. We

## CAPE TOWN

sailed into the bay in the early morning when the view was both striking and delightful. The now overbuilt hill, known as the Lion's Rump, was richly green, some few villas scattered over it, whilst the town itself was brilliantly lit up with the rays of the morning sun. Between it and the base of the steep and rocky Table Mountain behind, was a rich belt of trees into which seemed to run all the main streets leading up from the sea. The Bay faces the north-west, and as the worst wind blows from that quarter, no year then passed without some ships being driven ashore. The consequence was, that on the beach at the south-eastern end of the Bay, we saw the remains of what were once noble ships, that, having dragged their anchors or parted their cables, had been wrecked there at various times. We came in for one of these hurricanes, as I shall describe a little further on.

We had no sooner anchored than the ship was surrounded with boats manned by Malays, and laden with fruits of many kinds.

Trips to Wineburg and places in the neighbourhood were now the order of the day. I pitied the poor rank and file, in whom, at that period, sufficient trust was not placed to be allowed ashore. Even now, I may say in parenthesis, if the old school were allowed their way, they would receive very much the same treatment. We were asked out, and whether it was from being so long on board ship, or that the Dutch girls at the Cape were pretty, we found them very pleasant and attractive. A short time after our arrival, when it was my day of duty on board ship, the signal was made from shore to look out for a nor'-wester. The wind grew rapidly higher and higher, and the sea came rolling in with great violence. Some of the smaller craft drifted

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

past us towards the fatal beach at the upper end of the Bay, where several went ashore. All the big ships, riding with double anchors, had already paid out most of their cables when the signal was made to us from Fort Amsterdam, "prepare to land troops ; boats will be sent." All the men at once paraded on deck, and I was told off to take charge of the first boatload. A very fine and capacious sort of open yawl was soon alongside, into which about thirty men or more were packed as best we could. It was a matter of serious danger in such a sea to get from our ship on board this large cargo boat. We shoved off, but the sea was too much for us, although my boyish yachting experience told me how admirably she was handled by her Dutch crew. Every moment I thought she must go over, so much so that I kept my hands on the buckle of my sword belt, ready to cast it off the moment she did so. Reason told me I could do very little to save myself in such a sea, but I was at any rate determined to make a fight with it for my life. The skipper struggled hard to make the shore, but at last gave it up. He said the wind and sea had risen so much since he had left the landing place that even if we had succeeded in making it the men could not have been landed. We accordingly headed back to the ship, and were mostly slung on board. I was much struck with the quiet manner in which the young soldiers behaved, obeying with alacrity all orders given to them.

Having stayed about ten days at the Cape, we set sail for Calcutta, sighting the little islands of St. Paul's and Amsterdam in the very stormy seas of that far-off parallel of southern latitude. In those days all ships bound for the Bay of Bengal followed the western trades as far as those islands, and making "a new departure" from them,

turned northwards towards the mouth of the sacred Ganges: Before the end of October, we had sighted the low-lying mudbanks near the mouth of the river Hooghley. We anchored more than once, after taking a pilot on board at the "Sand Heads," and successfully passed the very dangerous reach of the river, known as the "James and Mary."

As we neared Calcutta we heard minute guns being fired from Fort William, and wondered and asked one another for whom they could be. I can remember as it might have been yesterday the shock, the thrill, I experienced—I am sure those around me felt it also—when a voice from the first boat alongside cried out, "The Duke of Wellington is dead." As we had speculated upon whom it could be who had passed away, strange to say, the great Duke's name had occurred to none. From earliest childhood we had been so accustomed to hear him referred to as the greatest of living men, that my generation had grown up to regard him as an Immortal, and as a national institution. Every voice was hushed, and in a moment all was silence on deck. Had we been told a king was dead, we should in duty bound have cried, "*Vive le Roi.*" But where was another Wellington to be found? There were many kings and heirs-apparent, but the world possessed only one "Iron Duke," the great conqueror of Napoleon, who had at Waterloo freed many prostrate nations, and restored peace to an exhausted Europe.

England's mainstay had parted, and the nation had so much forgotten how long its noble purpose had been fulfilled, that when the catastrophe came it was unexpected. It seemed for the time to be a knock-me-down blow past all recovery. Our national influence abroad, as well as our security at home, was felt to be no longer what it had been



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

whilst our great captain and pilot lived. There was no one who could take his place in the Councils of our Sovereign. She had lost her most valued friend, the strongest support of her throne, the statesman, honest, truthful, and frank as he was wise, to whom she could at all times turn for advice with the fullest confidence. Wellington was dead. And all on that deck who heard the news as it was called out, felt that England was no longer what she had been.

We have since had many able ministers, devoted to their country's interest, and also a host of self-called statesmen devoted to politics, but to compare the best amongst them all with the great soldier and patriot then taken from us would have been as ridiculous as to have spoken of the wherry alongside with all the importance and admiration usually bestowed upon a three-decker.

His was no churchwarden-like policy, and his reputation for general sagacity, as well as for military leadership, was as fully recognized abroad as it was with us. Not very many years before his death war between Prussia and France was believed to be inevitable. As the Prussians had no great general then, their king turned to Wellington and asked him to take command of the Prussian army should war be forced upon him. His answer was very characteristic of the man. He said he was the Queen's servant, and would do as she ordered him. This is a fact little known, for the expected war was postponed for another generation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The negotiation in this matter was carried on by Lord William Russell, then our Minister in Berlin, and copies of the correspondence were in the hands of Lord Arthur Russell, his son, who showed them to me.

## CHAPTER II

### Land in India—On Active Service in Burmah in 1852-3

ALL the soldiers on board the *Maidstone* were sent by river from Calcutta to Chinsura, an old Dutch settlement, where the English drafts for regiments in the Bengal Presidency were then annually collected before being sent to their respective destinations. There we were lodged in a long range of officers' quarters, an unusual thing in India, and every room was crowded with cornets and ensigns awaiting their marching orders. It was a dull dreary mildewy-looking place, without any possible amusement, except snipe-shooting in the neighbouring rice fields, where snakes abounded, and bad fever was to be easily caught. However, neither snakes nor dread of fever deterred boys like myself from the sport, for the snipe were plentiful. I wish all our amusements had been as harmless. The church stood within twenty yards of our verandah, and its tower was adorned with a clock whose dial terribly and temptingly resembled a target. Idling all day, it was a frequent amusement to use it for pistol practice, until it became so plastered with bullets that either the works were injured or the hands were prevented from moving. At least something of the sort took place one day, for the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

clock suddenly stopped, and thenceforward during the remainder of our stay at Chinsura the hands pointed to 11.15.

One evening a party of young officers started to pay a visit to the French settlement of Chandernagore. It was within an easy drive for a one-horse buggy, along a level road. The party dined at the inn there, and all partook freely of French wines. Having paid the bill they started to return, and a very jovial and a somewhat too noisy lot they were. As luck would have it, before leaving the settlement—it is only about a mile square, one side being the river—they had to pass a guardhouse of French sepoy. Not thinking much of any native soldiers, and having a thorough contempt for those in the French service, the Devil prompted one of the party to propose they should stop and disarm this guard. No sooner said than done—they seized the arms of the guard and dispersed the sepoy, who fled for their lives.

The poor clock had been destroyed and did not remonstrate, but the governor of this French settlement did, and there was a terrible uproar. His flag had been insulted ! However, before anything serious could come of it, the young perpetrators of this silly joke were on their way to join their regiments in the North-West Provinces, the Punjaub, etc., etc. I think what most led to this mad incident was a British contempt for this ridiculous little settlement, not larger than a good kitchen garden in the midst of our great Indian Empire.

While I was at Chinsura, one of the great annual Hindoo festivals came off. Such beating of tom-toms and picturesque processions to the river ghats ! A native who supplied us with all we needed in the way of beer and wine, invited

## CHINSURA

me to his house to see the god he had had built for the holy function. Each family of any note or fortune in the place had their idol made for the solemn rite. It looked somewhat like the images of the Virgin Mary in the Catholic churches, except that instead of being draped in a satin costume of Parisian fashion, it was clothed in flowing garments more suited to an Eastern climate. There was the same amount of sham jewels in both instances. The native idol was upon the last day of the festival carried in noisy procession, surrounded by ardent and fanatical believers, to the river, into which it was thrown, and thus confided to the waters, so sacred in their eyes. Made of mud, it soon returns to whence it came. My native host confided to me with great pride that his idol had cost him 150 rupees, an amount then equal to £15.

I made one or two trips to Calcutta, to see its fort and Government House, on whose top stood many of the huge, gruesome birds known as adjutants. I saw a little of society, and was astonished at the luxury in which the members of the great Indian Civil Service then lived.

Chinsura was soon clear of all troops, except the draft for the regiments then in Burmah. All through the months spent in the voyage out, I had looked forward hopefully to be in time for some of the military operations then being carried out in the valley of the Irrewaddy, and every day spent on the banks of the Hooghley was to me so much time misspent. Like all young soldiers, I longed to hear the whistle of a bullet fired in earnest ; and as days went by, the opportunity of doing so seemed to elude me. It seemed as if I should miss the Burmese campaign altogether, and return home without having seen a shot fired.

The long hoped for orders arrived at last, and the 80th

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

draft from home duly embarked in one of John Company's steamers for Rangoon. General Godwin, an old man in a wig, who then commanded the army in Burmah, had proved himself to be a man of energy in this, his second Burmese War. All the kingdom as far as Prome had been conquered and annexed to our empire, and there seemed to be nothing left to do. The Civil servants from India had begun to arrive, and to set up those many offices of revenue, administrative and judicial establishments, which in all our Eastern possessions are the outward evidence of a civilized government. The European troops were far from healthy, bad fevers and cholera diminishing their numbers sadly. This had been the case in a still more marked degree in the former war, during which every known hygienic law was scouted. My occupations were few. I was drilled every morning, and taught the ordinary movements of a squad and company. The whole 80th detachment being recruits like myself, were similarly occupied in learning the goose step, and those "extensive motions," which then constituted the only physical drill taught the soldier. We lived in wooden huts inside the great and well-built stockade the enemy had erected at the beginning of the war. It consisted of a substantial rampart about twelve feet wide on top, and revetted within and without by great teak logs placed vertically with the lower ends sunk in the ground. The intervening space was filled with well rammed earth. The logs of the outer revetment stretched up some six or more feet above the terreplein of the rampart, every fourth or fifth log being cut some three feet shorter than the rest to form loopholes and embrasures along it. There were many flanking towers, and the gates were well protected with traverses made in a similar fashion. Practically

## RANGOON 1852

it formed a square, each side being about a mile long. It joined the hill—partly natural, but still more of it being made by man—on which stands the magnificent Shue Dagon pagoda ; strongly entrenched, it thus served the purpose of an interior keep. These ramparts were occupied at night by our native infantry, the gates having strong guards upon them at all times, and beyond the pagoda on its eastern face a strong picket of British soldiers was mounted day and night. It usually consisted of so many men from each of the detachments left behind when the army had advanced on Prome. A guard so furnished was not likely to be either a very harmonious or efficient protection ; and what made it worse was, that since the arrival of the drafts from home for the regiments up the river, there was always in it a strong leaven of badly drilled and worse disciplined recruits.

Not long after landing I found myself in orders to command this “outlying picket.” I was very proud, but the consciousness that I was absolutely unable even to move any body of men on parade, and ignorant even of the required words of command, introduced a strong element of shyness and funk into my feelings of satisfaction. As regarded the art of outpost duty, few knew it theoretically better than I did. I could have passed a high competitive examination in all the then commonly known books on light infantry, and its mode of employment in the field as practised by our army in the Peninsula. For years back I had spent my spare money—it was not much, however—in buying all such books, so that my little military library far exceeded in size and useful works those of even our old generals of that time. But although I knew what the objects of these outposts were, and how I could secure them, what I should

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

do to strengthen my positions, and was well read in the many ruses I had to guard against on the part of an enterprising enemy, I was absolutely unequal to the mechanical operation of getting my men from their own parade ground to the out-post in question. Prompted, however, by a good-natured sergeant, who in years might have been my father, I succeeded, much to my delight, in marching off my party and in drawing it up, facing the old picket I was to relieve. My picket was made up of men belonging to the Royal Irish, the King's Own Light Infantry, and to the South Stafford Regiment, to which I then belonged. On parade they stood according to the seniority of their regiments from the right, in the order I have placed them. Such was and still is the rule, so that in a line made up of several regiments or detachments of regiments, the Royal Irish, being the senior of the Queen's regiments then in Burmah, would always have been on the right of the line. The subaltern I relieved told me that he had numbered off from the left, so that I should number off from the right ; and away he marched with his men, giving me no further information or advice. In accordance with what he told me, I ordered my picket to number off from the right. The right-hand man of the Royal Irish positively refused to do any such thing, adding, as his excuse, " Shure, they're always numbering off from the right." I felt horrified at my inexperience, but ordered him to be made a prisoner. It was not until I had made three of these villains prisoners that I came to a man who obeyed my order. Of course these three men, seeing that I was very young and absolutely ignorant of my drill, thought they would, in their Hibernian fashion, bamboozle and perhaps terrify me. However, I sent back all three to their own lines, and had them replaced by three others.

## ON OUTLYING PICKET

My first night's picket duty had begun unfortunately. Whenever it came to the turn of the Royal Irish to find the sentries, they invariably fired at enemies they pretended to see approaching the post. This entailed upon me many long weary walks round my line of sentries, although I knew well they were doing this to spite me for having sent back as prisoners three of their comrades for disobedience of orders. But angry as I was at these many tramps in the dark over broken ground, I laughed to myself at the ingenious, amusing and entirely untruthful accounts they gave me of why they had fired, and by doing so had alarmed the picket. Some had evidently fired at stray cows, others at nothing, though had I believed their stories I ought to have sent back for reinforcements to repel the numerous hostile bodies of Burmans they swore to have seen approaching them.

It was a lovely night, and I walked up and down in front of my picket for many hours. The great Shue Dagon Pagoda, rich in gilding and near at hand, stood out in the starlight, a silhouette against the deep steel-blue of a clear Eastern midnight sky. The lightest breath of air rang several of the gilt bells which studded the graceful, umbrella-shaped crown in which this lofty pagoda ended. The tongue of every bell had a sort of heart-shaped plate attached to it, which caught the gentlest wind, so their music was practically continuous.

In the profound stillness of night this soft murmur of sweet-toned bells, some 500 feet above me, was delightful. I remember it still as if I had heard it last night; I remember how, as I walked up and down, by the pile of arms, my boyish mind ranged from warlike aspirations to thoughts of home.

I was very proud of being actually in command of an



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

outpost, and I carefully went over in my mind the many lessons I had learnt from military books on the subject. I planned what I should do if attacked, and oh, how I longed to be attacked !

My picket was lodged in a highly-carved wooden Poongey house, and on the opposite side of the narrow road where it stood was another very similar, but smaller, building. This was made use of by the officer. Tired and sleepy, more than once I lay down on its boarded floor ; but rats abounded, and an abominable lizard, calling out " chuck-chew " all through the night, made sleep difficult. There was a common belief that this particular lizard was dangerous, and that its bite, if not fatal, was serious. I had and still have the greatest horror of all reptiles, small and large, and these Burmese lizards, with their hideous heads and bright many-coloured bodies, made me shudder as I thought of their possibly running over my face when asleep.

I have been on outpost duty in other campaigns times without number, and fifty eventful years have passed since that night ; but yet, not only are all its occurrences still fresh in my memory, but so are also the subjects of my thoughts and waking dreams, and the hopes which then filled my breast are still marked there indelibly.

As a boy I had often played in dark evenings at " hide and seek " out of doors ; it was a game I loved. In after years, as a regimental officer, how much I was often reminded of that amusement by night outpost duty. As I peered with straining eyes through the darkness towards the enemy's position, to try if I could see any one moving, and as I listened for the noise of hostile patrols or of a word carelessly spoken aloud in my front, the sensations of my youthful games by night came back vividly before me.

## AN IRISH ORDERLY ROOM

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the night,  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds.

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower  
The moping owl does to the moon complain  
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,  
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

What a memory of varied, and alas, vanished scenes on outpost duty these beautiful lines bring back to me !

The next morning I had to appear at the orderly room of the Royal Irish detachment. It was a little room in a small teak-built hut, and there Colonel Grattan, C.B., of that historic regiment, daily dispensed justice to his young recruits. He was an old and amusing Irishman, full of quaint stories, and a very pleasant companion. Taken prisoner in the China War, he had been carried about in a cage as a show for the amusement of millions who had never before seen a European. His smiling face and grotesque grimaces always obtained for him a favourable reception. He greeted me pleasantly when I entered his orderly room, where—I may explain for civilian readers—the commanding officer of every regiment and battalion in the Army holds a daily court to administer justice all round. Three prisoners from Tipperary were marched in bareheaded, and were drawn up facing the colonel, who sat, pen in hand, behind a little table which separated them from him. A corporal and a file of the guard, with drawn bayonets, stood beside the culprits, an acting sergeant-major, standing, as all the others were, at “Attention,” made up the stage. A solemn silence that somewhat awed me pervaded the scene, and my shyness became greater when the funny-looking colonel addressing me, asked me sternly what complaint I had to make against the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

prisoners. I told my story as best I could, being extremely impressed by what I believed to be the gravity of the offence. My military reading and study of the Mutiny Act and Articles of War had led me to believe that, next to striking an officer or running away in battle, these prisoners had committed the most heinous offence in absolutely refusing to obey a lawful command when on outpost duty before the enemy. I expected they would be at once sent to trial before a general court martial, and either sentenced to death, or if their lives were spared in consideration of their youth and entire ignorance of a soldier's duty, they would at least be transported.

When I had finished my awful indictment, the colonel, with his funny little grey eyes, frowned from under his long grey eyebrows, first at me and then in sternness at the boy prisoners before him. There was an awful pause ; you could have heard a pin drop if any one there had had such an evidence of civilization ready for the occasion. I held my breath, not knowing what was coming. I looked at the sergeant-major ; his face was wooden and devoid of all expression as he stolidly looked straight before him into nothing. In a moment a volley of oaths from the colonel relieved the atmospheric pressure. He called the prisoners "limbs of Satan," and choking, partly at least I should say from an assumed fury, and partly because his vituperative vocabulary had come to an end, he jumped to his feet, upsetting the table, with its ink bottle, papers, etc., and rushed upon the prisoners, kicking hard at the nearest, and crying aloud : "Get out, ye blackguards ; never let me see you again." Whether it was that the prisoners were accustomed to this mode of justice and, being frightened, were anxious to avoid the toes of their colonel's boots as he

## THE IRISH SOLDIER

lashed out at them or not, they turned round and ran for their lives, the sergeant-major after them, with their caps, which he had been holding—according to regulation—whilst this strangely scenic trial was being enacted.

I was in dismay, and for a moment thought of running too, but seeing the old colonel burst out laughing, I tried to smile, but it was an unhealthy attempt at hilarity on my part. However, being assured the men would never forget the scene or misbehave again, I went away, feeling rather that I had been the culprit, and had only escaped condign punishment through consideration of my youth and complete ignorance of all military customs and laws. I don't know whether these three boys from Tipperary retained a lasting remembrance—as I did—of this curious mode of administering justice, but I am sure their colonel's conduct was far more in consonance with their views of propriety, and far better suited to the case, than any sentence of imprisonment or trial by court martial would have been. I laugh now as I think of the whole scene, and as I do so I feel all the more how necessary it is that Irish soldiers should have Irish officers over them, who understand their curiously Eastern character, and who are consequently better able to deal with them than strangers can.

We now have a far better taught body of officers and a far more highly trained rank and file, and there is an infinitely keener sense of duty alive amongst us all than formerly. The Army is far more of a profession, I might truthfully say of a learned profession, than it was. Since purchase was abolished, all officers feel that promotion and distinction, according to their natural talents, is within the grasp of those who will work hard, and who are determined to make themselves thoroughly efficient as military business

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

men, and fit to lead others. We no longer flog our men, and there has grown up—very much I believe in consequence of that fact—between them and us an intimate feeling of comradeship and friendship that did not then exist.

It was always my practice to collect information about the inhabitants of any place where I found myself. The manners, customs, means of livelihood, and especially the religious belief of distant races, interested me greatly and gave me much to say in my home letters. Upon arrival in Burmah, I knew nothing of Buddhism; had read nothing, I may say, about Buddha or his holy life, and regarded the system of religion he founded as merely one of the many phases of idolatry which I foolishly believed to be so common in Asia. Like most ignorant boys, I assumed that the Koran contained the only religious teaching outside our Bible worthy of study. Mahomet was such a splendid character as a man, and his faith resembled so much that of Abraham, of Moses and of Joshua, that it took easy hold of my youthful imagination. Those great fighting kaliphs, who, with the Koran in one hand and the sword in the other, had spread their religion and their arts and sciences over so much of the world, had always been heroes to me. There was a simplicity and an open manliness about their religion. The Old Testament had always and still has a deep, a holy charm for me. It is so human, and its heroes come so near in character and in faith to those of early Christianity. I soon learnt in Burmah how much there was in common between my simple faith and that of the Buddhist, when divested of what I may term its speculative philosophy. Every morning there went past my hut one or more pongees—the native priests—begging for the food they required for the day. Their closely-shaven heads and canary-yellow

## EDUCATION IN BURMAH

garments were everywhere respected. The people did not cringe or bow or kneel before them in any superstitious awe of their priestly attributes, but welcomed them as holy men devoted to their religion, and as the schoolmasters of the young. They were universally regarded as good men who worked at an occupation which brought them no worldly wealth, but which was necessary for the common good. They were not only priests, but secular schoolmasters, and the result of this system was that one rarely met a Burman who could not read, write, and do simple sums in arithmetic. Centuries before we had any system of national education there was in existence in all countries where Gauatma was worshipped a well-established educational system for the young. In my daily rides round Rangoon, it was pleasant to hear the hum of children's voices repeating their daily lessons as I passed each village or district schoolhouse. How often I thought then of the hundreds of parishes at home without either school or schoolmaster, though the squire's house was large and many of the neighbouring gentry were fairly rich. The contrast was not to the credit of our Christianity. Yet we called the Burmese barbarians and heathens, and dubbed them "poor soldiers" because they did not understand modern war!

To me, as to all men arriving in Burmah from India, the people of the former country seemed a much superior race. If you listened to some Bengalee, or to any two of your native servants as they talked amongst themselves, all their conversation was invariably upon the subject of money, of food, and the quality of the water in the locality. Those subjects were apparently always uppermost in their minds, and as they conversed no smile on their faces told you that life brought them any pleasure. A serious and

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

a very poor people, whose existence seemed to be one of constant struggle for the necessities of life, and into which amusement in any form seemed to enter little. But their annual religious festivals and the domestic events of all men's lives, marriage, birth of children, and the death of wives or brothers, were their recognized opportunities for display. No matter how poor they were, they would spend their last pice, and would even have recourse to the village money-lender to enable them to mark these family events to the best of their ability. The tom-tomming—drum beating—especially at night, announced that the poor Hindoo was celebrating some domestic occurrence which custom—that most horrible of tyrants in all ages and amongst all peoples—required him to notify to his neighbours after a certain long established fashion. But, watching the man's face and the countenances of his friends who joined him upon the occasion, though it may, from a sense of propriety, have been a matter of pride, or, at best, of satisfaction to him and his family, no smile, no laugh or tears bespoke the man's inner feelings. To the ignorant stranger the whole affair seemed to be a matter of duty, but not one of either rejoicing or of sorrow.

But how different were the Burmans. They did not take life thus seriously, but laughed and talked, and looked you straight in the face as they spoke to you. They are fond of fun, of football—as they play it—and devoted to cock-fighting. As a people they are of a decidedly Mongolian type, with broad shoulders, strong necks, long bodies, and short bandy but muscular legs.

When contrasted with the mild Hindoo, they strike you as a fine manly people, who enjoy life, and ought to make good soldiers. But although brave hardy fellows, that can

## THE BURMESE SOLDIER

live upon little, you cannot convert them into disciplined soldiers. They revolt against restraint, and if punished for any offence against discipline they desert, and once in their dense forests they are hard to find. They stand being shot at well when behind stockaded defences, but they dislike leaving them, even though a favourable opportunity presents itself, when they might easily inflict great loss upon their enemy. They are by nature woodmen, carpenters, and wood-carvers. With the *dah*—the sword of the country—which no Burman then went without, they can erect stockades and construct entanglements quicker than other forest races. The quantities of bamboo with which the country abounds, help him in the construction of these quickly devised and cleverly-made defences, to which he clings in action. His leaders throughout all our Burmese wars have failed him. They invariably preferred to live to fight another day rather than expose themselves. It seems as if they thought the privates alone should be exposed to serious danger, and generally they got safely away early in most fights. The soldier we encountered everywhere in action was a manly and independent fellow. His clothing is simple, and consists merely of a small pugree twisted through his long hair, a short cotton jacket, and a cloth wrapped round his loins and thighs, the long ends of which usually hang down from his waist in folds before him. His weapon is the *dah*, or native hiltless sword, and any sort of old musket. A cloth fastened round him contains his rice, and the pot to boil it in is usually slung to the barrel of his ill-kept firelock, together with the mat which forms his bed. A few bananas and a little native tobacco constitute his luxuries.

The difference between the men at Rangoon and those we had left behind us on the Hooghley was very marked,



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

but that between the women struck us all as greater still. The poor little timid cringing female of Bengal was a miserable creature when alongside of the well-built, muscular-looking and much lighter-coloured Burmese women. The former only seemed to exist in two conditions: she was either a very beautifully-shaped child, or a repulsive-looking old hag. Elephantiasis, so common amongst the women on the Hooghley, I never saw in Burmah. To catch sight of the Hindoo girl's face was no easy matter, for she fled at your approach; or, if surprised by meeting you as she came round the corner of a street, the white cotton shawl that covered her head was suddenly jerked over her face as she turned it to the wall until you had passed.

How different were the Burmese women! You met them everywhere, and you heard their laughter before you did so. Strong and upstanding, they looked you straight in the face with none of the diffident and frightened cringing air of the Hindoo. With roses gracefully entwined in their hair, and with a great green cheroot between their lips, or stuck into the large hole always made in the lobe of each ear, they march gracefully along, displaying at each step their well-shaped legs. They evidently criticized you in passing, for upon some remark from one of the party, there was often a hearty chorus of pleasant laughter, in which, however, there was not the faintest tone of insolence. It was a good-natured laugh, made probably at your expense. but made and enjoyed in no angry or inhospitable spirit. Apparently well fed, they took life lightly, with none of that depressing seriousness which seemed to characterize the Bengalese women I had seen during my short stay at Chinsura and my wanderings in that neighbourhood.

The war was apparently over, and I seemed destined to

## LIFE IN RANGOON

see no fighting in that country of teak forests and pagodas. I longed to get to Prome, where the regiment was that I belonged to, but as yet had never seen, as on the frontier there I thought I might have some chance of seeing even an outpost skirmish. The dull monotonous and what seemed to me useless life I led at Rangoon lacked every element of the soldiering to which I had always looked forward. I had practically nothing to do beyond learning my company drill for a couple of hours in the early morning. The officers I lived with were neither well read, interesting nor amusing. Old Captain Duperier, who had risen from the ranks and had been many years in the Shah of Persia's service, was my only resource, as he told me of countries and cities I knew nothing of. But my chief occupation was long solitary rides on an excellent Burman pony, and this enabled me to enjoy the beautiful woodland and lake scenery near Rangoon. I added largely to my sketch-book, and made a good military survey of the Burmese defences of the place, adding minute particulars and details of their well-designed and admirably-constructed stockades. Out of the five or six officers of the 80th Regiment then in Rangoon, I think I was the only one who even kept a pony or ever—as far as I knew—went beyond the precincts of what I may call our cantonments.

I had been nearly a year in the Army and had done nothing. This oppressed me, for I was vain enough to think that if I could only have a chance I should make something of it. The world was still before me, but my prospects were far from encouraging. I was eaten up by an inward fire of ambition—selfish and personal perhaps—an intense longing for active service in the field which filled my thoughts all through life until the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

sun rose on the morning of June 4, 1893, to remind me that I was sixty years old. And let me here confess what I have never told any one. I have often been asked by foolish people if I never felt nervous when in danger. I don't think that many men when in action have time to be nervous, or at least to analyse what is the real condition of their feelings on the point. But I often thought to myself before the bullets began to whistle near one, whether I should be killed or not that day. I can honestly say the one dread I had—and it ate into my soul—was that if killed I should die without having made the name for myself which I always hoped a kind and merciful God might permit me to win. All through my life—sinner though I have been—I trusted implicitly in God's providence, I believed He watched specially over me and intended me for some important work. My numerous hair-breadth escapes in action confirmed me all the more in what perhaps others may deem my presumptuous belief. But though it may have been presumptuous, still there it was to support me through many trials and to cheer me on to fresh efforts.

However, something good was in store for me, though it was brought about by a sad and a disgraceful disaster, and if it afforded me my first chance in life, it also entailed upon me a very severe wound from which I have suffered heavily ever since.

News suddenly reached us that we had met with a serious repulse at Donnabew, in which Captain Lock, C.B., of H.M.S. *Winchester* and many others had been killed, our guns taken, and the remainder of the party had escaped with difficulty. The first accounts we received magnified the disaster, but although on a small scale, as was the whole war, it struck us all with astonishment and horror.

## DISASTER AT DONNABEW 1853

The older officers who had had experience in war shook their heads and said the misfortune was the result of allowing a naval officer to try his hand at soldier's work, of which he knew nothing. Much as from childhood I had always admired the Navy and its great achievements, the more we subsequently learned of the details the more I felt the truth of this military view of the affair.

In the first Burmese War the chief at Donnabew had given us much trouble, and history now repeated itself. A powerful chief—we called him a robber-chief—named Meeah-Toon, who ruled there, had made himself very troublesome by attacking, and often capturing, our native boats employed in carrying supplies and stores between Rangoon and Prome. We said he was a pirate, but his countrymen looked upon him as a national hero. At any rate, he had shown more daring and determination than any other of the Burmese King's generals, and seemed determined to dispute our right to interfere with him. Since our arrival, he had pillaged the country almost to within sight of Rangoon, and trusting to the strong position he occupied about twenty-five miles inland from the river, he defied us. His village was surrounded by a dense and pestilential jungle, and all round it the country was cut up by creeks communicating with the Irrewaddy, and by wet nullahs leading from them. He was strongly fortified, and it was in every way just the sort of position most difficult for a British force to deal with. It was not the enemy's soldiers we had to dread, but cholera, from which even in the best stations there we had already suffered much. Some plucky attacks had been made upon him by boats from our fleet, which tried to work up the bigger creeks and backwaters with which his district abounded. But all these

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

attempts were repulsed, as the sailors found it impossible to remove the great trees which had been cleverly cut down on the banks of these creeks so as to fall into them, or to get past the teak piles and heavy stakes driven well home into their soft muddy bottoms.

The result was, this prince of dacoits soon began to think his position impregnable and his countrymen far and near to believe that he was too strong for us. Our position in Burmah demanded that there should be no doubt on this point in the native mind, so, early in February, 1853, it was resolved to make a more determined effort to bring him to reason. I think General Godwin was to blame for not taking the matter entirely into his own hands, but apparently still under the impression that the object could be best secured by a boat expedition, he left it to the Navy. It should have been a land operation, planned and led by a military officer, the boats co-operating as best they could.

Captain Lock, C.B., of H.M.S. *Winchester*, then lying at Rangoon, was ordered to make another boat attempt against Meeah-Toon with some 240 seamen and marines, whilst 300 of the 67th Bengal Native Infantry co-operated with them on land. Captain Lock's reputation stood high as an able naval officer and the most gallant and dashing of men. He took with him two small bronze guns on field carriages and some rocket tubes. He soon found he could not force his way to Meeah-Toon's town by any of the creeks, as all were blocked with trees and piles as before. Whereupon he unwisely determined to land his men, and leaving his boats behind to march the twenty-five miles which were supposed to lie between the Irrewaddy and the point aimed at. This at once converted the affair into a land operation, and the naval captain should have placed himself

## DISASTER AT DONNABEW 1853.

under the orders of the officer commanding the native regiment. This he did not do, but on February 3, 1853, recklessly pushed forward along a very narrow track through the dense jungle before him without adopting any of the simplest military precautions that are essential for safety, or even to avoid surprise. The colonel of the sepoy regiment was a man with not enough self-assertion to insist upon assuming command, but it was said, and generally believed, that he did venture to remonstrate with Captain Lock upon the foolish rashness of his proceedings. Report at the time said, and I can only write what was then believed and left uncontradicted, that Captain Lock pooh-poohed the colonel, and vowed that he did not want him or his men, and that his own bluejackets and marines were quite able to do the job alone. If this were so, it was fortunate for all concerned that the snubbed colonel resolved to follow in the rear, for when this rashly-led body of sailors was surprised, many being shot down, and a regular stampede had begun, it was only the steadiness and military training of the sepoys, under their own officers, that preserved Captain Lock's party from annihilation. The more I learned subsequently as to what took place, the more evident it became that this disaster was occasioned by Captain Lock's ignorance of military tactics and of the precautions to be taken when marching through a strange forest occupied by an enemy. I prefer to draw a veil over all that followed, but in the confusion of a hurried retreat, the guns, rocket tubes, ammunition, and even the dead, were abandoned to the enemy, and the gallant sailor who commanded died of his wounds a few days afterwards. The loss was thirteen killed and seventy-nine wounded. The enemy followed and harassed the retreating party nearly as far as Donnabew,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

and more than once they tried to head the party to cut it off: it was only the disciplined steadiness of the native infantry which then saved the position. My own experience makes me feel that the stern and excellent discipline on board ship is not always so trustworthy when sailors are converted into infantry soldiers ashore. They do exceedingly well as artillerymen in charge of guns ashore, as we have recent cause to acknowledge with gratitude.

Poor Captain Lock, the gallant sailor who with his life paid the penalty of his rashness on land, was buried with military honours at Rangoon, all officers of the garrison attending the funeral. It was an imposing ceremony, and we felt that the Queen had lost an able and daring sailor who, on his own element, was second to none. There was, however, a strong feeling amongst the soldiers that the many lives lost, and the indignity of such a repulse, were entirely due to the rashness of the brave but inexperienced leader.

I remember well the order which General Godwin issued upon the occasion, and how thoroughly it was appreciated. In it, he directed the senior military officer to assume chief command in all mixed expeditions on shore, no matter what might be the rank or position of the naval officer on the spot. He added that, "he justifies this arrangement by reference to the fact that when troops are serving on board ship, the senior naval officer takes command over all the military officers with the force." It is, however, probable that if taught and drilled as foot soldiers, that very process might prevent them from being the splendid fellows they are on board ship, or when used as gunners ashore. Soldiers, in the same way, would make very bad sailors. Admiral Sir William Hewitt, who accompanied me to Koomassee

## NAVAL BRIGADE ASHORE

with a battalion of sailors, was a friend for whom I had the warmest affection, and as a wise and dashing sailor the greatest admiration. He said to me when he had got back to Cape Coast Castle, "Never again will anything induce me to land bluejackets to act as infantry. I will always give you as many as you want to fight guns as artillerymen, but never again as foot soldiers." Such was the result of his experience in Ashantee.

I have such an intense admiration for the Navy, for the splendid daring and courage of all belonging to it when upon their own element that I dislike hinting any fault with either its officers or seamen upon any point. But I wish to leave on record, as a warning to those who come after me, the deliberate opinion of the able and experienced Admiral Sir William Hewitt which I have given here. He had served with distinction in the Naval Brigade before Sebastopol and was always to the fore in our many fights and skirmishes between the River Prah and Koomassee, and saw what sailors could and could not do ashore when used as foot soldiers.



### CHAPTER III

#### Expedition to Donnabew—Lead a Storming Party—Badly Wounded—Sent Home 1853

AS soon as the news of this untoward event reached Army Head Quarters in Prome, the general commanding the army in Burmah issued orders for the despatch to Donnabew of a force consisting of the undermentioned detachments :—

A small party of irregular cavalry.

200 of the Royal Irish Regiment.

200 of the King's Own Light Infantry,

200 of the 4th Sikhs.

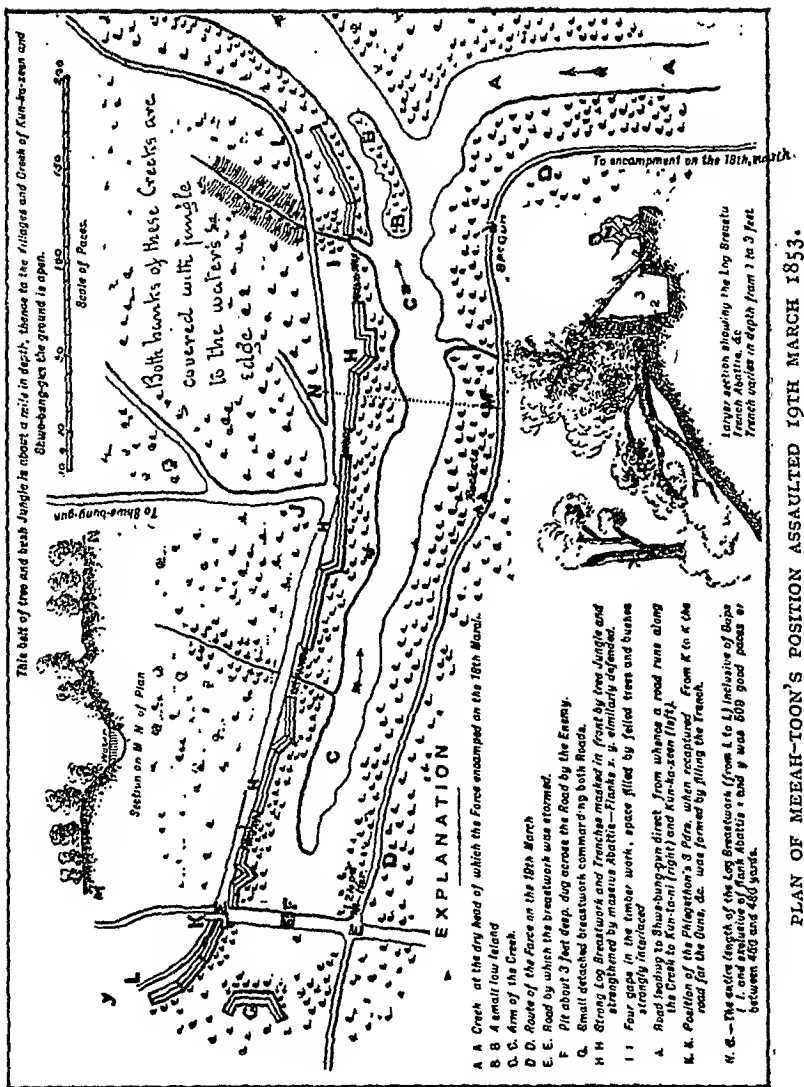
The 67th Bengal Native Infantry.

Detachments of the Madras Sappers.

Detachments of the Madras and Bengal Artillery, with one 12-pounder howitzer, some rocket tubes and two Cohorn mortars.

These troops from Prome were to be joined by the 130 recruits of the South Staffordshire Regiment from Rangoon, who had lately arrived from England.

Brigadier-General Sir John Cheap, of the Bengal Engineers, was selected for the command of this force. It was small, but in the absence of roads through the forest country to be traversed, it would have been difficult to have fed a



PLAN OF MEEAH-TOON'S POSITION ASSAULTED 19TH MARCH 1853.



## EXPEDITION TO DONNABEW

larger body of men at any considerable distance from the river.

When the news from Prome told us that a new expedition to Donnabew was being organized, I felt all the more how hard was my fate in being kept at Rangoon. My spirits sank and I seemed to be eating my heart away.

As soon as our very modest dinner was over, I usually took a chair into the open in front of our hot barracks, and there, alone with a big cigar, I listened to the band of the Bengal Fusiliers as it played at tattoo. Towards the end of February, I forget the exact date, I was thus engaged when I saw a native with a lanthorn approach, and behind him the tall figure of our brigade major, "handsome Bob Hawkes," a great favourite, and then a well-known man in India. He asked for the commanding officer, so I jumped up and brought Captain Duperier to him, feeling sure there was something in the wind. In a few minutes it became generally known that orders had been just received for the detachment of the 80th recruits to proceed forthwith to Donnabew to join Sir John Cheap's force, which as yet had accomplished nothing there. In the midst of my intense joy, however, the horrible thought occurred to me that as the junior ensign it was likely I should be left to take charge of the "details," whom one is always obliged to leave behind upon such occasions. The very thought of such a possibility almost maddened me. But as my commanding officer wanted to take me, he told off the senior ensign for this duty, and my mind was at rest upon that point.

We had few preparations to make. It was upon this expedition that I for the first time saw British officers wear flannel instead of linen or cotton shirts, and it was the first time I ever wore one. In every other respect, our clothing

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

was entirely unsuited for campaigning in a tropical climate. The Queen's Army took an idiotic pride in dressing in India as nearly as possible in the same clothing they wore at home. Upon this occasion, the only difference was in the trousers, which were of ordinary Indian drill dyed blue, and that round our regulation forage cap we wore a few yards of puggaree of a similar colour. We wore our ordinary cloth shell jackets buttoned up to the chin, and the usual white buckskin gloves. Could any costume short of steel armour be more absurd in such a latitude? The officers of the East India Company were sensibly dressed in good helmets with ample turbans round them, and in loose jackets of cotton drill. As a great relaxation of the Queen's regulations, our men were told they need not wear their great stiff leathern stocks. This was a relief to the young recruits, but most of the old soldiers clung to theirs, asserting that the stock protected the back of the neck against the sun, and kept them cool. I assume it was rather the force of habit that made them think so.

We left Rangoon the first week in March 1853 in a river steamer with a flat in tow. All ranks were extremely crowded and uncomfortable, which made us feel all the more keenly the great thunderstorm that overtook us the evening of our departure. I had never seen its like before. Our anchors dragged in the soft mud of the Irrewaddy, and we were nearly driven ashore upon the right bank. So vivid was the lightning that at each flash we could see the leaves of the jungle trees which stretched down to near the river's edge as they bent before this tornado. The heaviest tropical rain followed, and when it stopped an invasion of the largest and most muscular mosquitos I have ever encountered rendered all chance of sleep impossible. The men, who were

## ON THE IRREWADDY

so crowded and packed as to have little lying-down space, suffered greatly, and I felt a brute at being better off in this respect than they were. Everything comes to an end, and the horrors of that night were no exception.

From Rangoon we had about eighty or ninety miles to go up the Irrewaddy in a north-westerly direction against a strong current, and when the tide was ebbing we made little way against it. As we neared our destination we passed more than one raft with a bamboo frame fixed vertically upon it bearing the crucified body of some poor devil whom Meeah-Toon was supposed to have thus put to death. The legs and arms were stretched so as to form a sort of X, or St. Andrew's Cross. Horrible sights these were, and not calculated to raise the robber-chief in our estimation.

We landed at Donnabew in the afternoon of March 6, near a fine poongey house with a very elaborately carved roof. We found Sir John Cheap's force awaiting our arrival, and were informed that it was to start the next day. We moved a little up the river to bivouac for the night.

We were soon all in the water cooling and washing our heated and dirty bodies in the Irrewaddy. I was drying myself on the bank when I heard a shout that a man had sunk. He could not swim, and had gone out too far to where the bank suddenly shelved down steeply. He never rose again, and although helped by several men who swam as well as I did, we could not find him. The water was so thick with mud that nothing could be seen when you dived. This delayed me a long time, as one does not like giving up the search, even after reason declares it hopeless, when up came Major, now General, Sir Harry Holdich, and began pitching into me for this unfortunate occurrence. As I felt

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

that I deserved more praise than blame for my part in the affair, I was very much hurt and thought I should never like my new commanding officer, who had only just arrived and taken over command of the recruits I was serving with.

Before long Holdich, who was a thoroughly good fellow and a very plucky soldier, having ascertained the facts (not from me, however, for I was far too proud and too angry to tell him what had taken place), came to me and with the generous frankness which always distinguished him, told me he had made a mistake and was sorry for it. He had seen a great deal of service as A.D.C. to his uncle, Sir Harry Smith, and had been badly wounded at Sobraon. He was, for those days, a very young brevet-major, and I felt it a great pleasure and honour to serve under one who had seen so much hard fighting, both at the Cape and in India. He used afterwards to tell me interesting stories of his many fighting adventures, though his modesty made it somewhat difficult to draw these from him.

We started the following day, March 7, 1853, about 2 p.m., having only, as we were told, about twenty-five miles between us and the enemy's stronghold. But as far as we regimental officers could judge, the information we obtained about the country and the enemy's doings was seldom worth much. Sir John Cheap was, I think, badly served by the civil commissioner sent with him, upon whom he had to depend for all news of the enemy. One would have thought that if experience had ever proved anything, or had taught any useful lesson, it was a condemnation of the old practice of sending a civilian into the field to control or influence the movements of an army. It had been discredited with us since Great Marlborough's wars against the armies of France, but in some form or other it had been continued

## EXPEDITION TO DONNABEW 1853

by the East India Company. Upon this commissioner devolved the duty of collecting intelligence regarding the enemy's doings, his whereabouts and intentions, and also—as a rule—the responsibility of supplying the guides required for each column of troops. Those obtained during this expedition were bad, and often misled us—as I believe—through ignorance of what we wanted. I don't think they misled us from any patriotic motive, but at times from fear of subsequent punishment by their own people. This was a serious matter in a dense and unmapped jungle, whose straggling roads, or rather paths, wound about with no apparent reason for such a constant change of direction. The general course of our march was at a right angle from the river into the great jungle close at hand. Some shots were fired as the main body entered the forest by a rough country wheel-track. The day was extremely hot and the marching heavy, but these shots were a kind of pick-me-up to all of us boys, and at once officer and private took an increased interest in the affair. Some of the enemy's scouts and skirmishers were here and there to be seen, and now and then a puff of smoke and the whiz of a bullet, generally fired high, assured us we had an enemy in front. The recruits I was with spread out into a sort of skirmishing line, but as few of these had ever before fired a round with Brown Bess, or, as far as I knew, had ever fired any sort of gun in their lives, the fire we opened may possibly have had some moral effect, but could not certainly have inflicted any serious loss upon the enemy. Advancing across an open space I saw a man killed for the first time in my life. I was not at the moment in the least excited, and it gave me an unpleasant sensation. He was a Burman, and he was killed by Beauchamp Seymour, who having been



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

just made a commander, had joined us upon landing as a volunteer to "see the fun." Being then very young, I looked upon him as quite a middle-aged man, and when years afterwards I came to know him well I often reminded him of that skirmish. We pushed on slowly along a jungle cart-track, and about five or six o'clock in the evening, after a good deal of firing "in front," we halted upon an unfordable creek. We had taken with us some twenty or thirty large casks and enough bridge superstructure to make a large raft with them. By the time my detachment had reached the creek, the Madras Sappers, the best of all military workmen, had already unloaded the casks and were busy in the construction of a raft.

My detachment halted for the night in the jungle about four or five hundred yards from the creek in front, and we all began our preparations for a bivouac. Fires were lit, and preparations made for an evening meal. The wood in a jungle does not burn well, but it is very easy to collect sufficient dead stuff for cooking purposes.

The enemy continued to annoy our sappers from the jungle beyond the creek. Many of the enemy fired from high trees, up which they had evidently climbed to obtain a clear view. It was at last deemed necessary to bring up a rocket tube to see how they would stand its alarming noise.

Being idle and not having yet had a really good opportunity of experiencing what was the sensation of being under fire, I felt a longing to go down to where the sappers were working. I was drawn there by an irresistible attraction I cannot describe, but was ashamed to confess this to my companions. Watching an opportunity, I strolled as if indifferently away from our bivouac, and quickly reached the bridging party I was in search of. A steep descent led

## UNDER FIRE 1853

to the creek from the jungle-covered plateau where we had halted, and I soon became entangled amidst a crowd of native carts laden with bridging materials. Large numbers of draft oxen were munching their corn amongst the carts, and the whole scene was full of life and picturesque interest. There was a good deal of firing from the enemy's side of the creek about 150 yards off, and I heard what I had come in search of, the whiz of bullets as they flew past me, and plunged into the neighbouring trees. I was near the point where the road began to dip abruptly into the valley below, when a loud splashing and somewhat diabolical fizzing scream in the low scrub close by made me turn to see what it meant. It was our first rocket going off, but amidst the interest it aroused I became suddenly aware of a great stampede of the cart bullocks straight towards the spot where I was. I saw in an instant that my one chance of safety was to get behind the nearest cart before they reached me, and I rushed there in all haste. The Royal Irish were on baggage guard, and an old soldier, seeing my rush and my excitement, and not seeing the bullocks, naturally put it down to the effect the enemy's dropping fire had upon me. In the best natured, but still in a somewhat patronizing tone, as from an old to a young soldier, he said, "Never mind, sir, you will soon become accustomed to it." On the spur of the moment I could have killed that man with satisfaction. That any one, especially a private soldier, should doubt my nerve, let me say should in fact attribute fear of bullets to me, was simply maddening. But what could I do? He was as cool as possible, and I was far from being so; indeed this inferred insinuation had aroused the worst feelings within me. I had gone there to test my nerve, to see how I should stand being under fire and what

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

effect it would have upon me, but I did not bargain for such a trial as this to my temper, and still more to my vanity. I tried to hide my anger and to look pleased, and even answered blandly, though my heart was on fire. By at once taking up an exposed position to observe from, I hoped in my rage to make this old devil of a soldier and those about him realize that although I was young and smooth of face I was as plucky as they were. I made my way back to my bivouac much crestfallen, but not until I had taken in well the manner in which the barrel rafts were put together. I drew sketches of the lashings that fastened the barrels to the superstructure ; and longed to help the officer in charge of the work. Although I had never gone through any engineering course, I had a good book knowledge of military bridging which I had learnt from the pages of *Straith's Fortification, etc.*, a capital work which I knew thoroughly well. I had copied its plans and drunk in its letterpress with quite as deep an interest as most boys of my age read Scott's novels.

The first question I usually asked my friend, Sergeant Quinn, every morning as I yawned and stretched myself when I heard the order to "fall in," was, who had died of cholera during the night, and who was then dying. It was a terrible thing at times to be left behind with a dying man, to bury him the moment he had ceased to breathe, and to watch the horrid vultures which from the neighbouring trees scanned us closely, whilst waiting for their prey. They picked a body to pieces in very short time. They never left us, but followed us daily on the march, not as guardian angels, but as loathsome scavengers. In all Eastern wars they seem to scent from afar the carrion they live upon. I had at this time a very fine-looking soldier servant who

## CHOLERA ON THE MARCH

had been previously in the 3rd Dragoon Guards. He had asked me to draw on his arm the Prince of Wales' Feathers, the badge of that regiment, so that he might have it tattooed there. The Burmese are very clever at that art, and the device was well done by a skilled tattooer. He was very proud of it, and I had thus impressed upon me early in my career how deep is the affection men retain for their first love, the regiment in which they first serve. This poor fellow died of cholera, and I helped to bury him in a very shallow grave. How many such gallant British soldiers lie thus buried all over the world, marking the routes of the armies that have made our Empire what it is. These men die that England should be great, and they die for her without a murmur, and yet, it is their valour and their self-sacrifice that enables home tradesmen to make fortunes, live at ease, and to marry their sons and daughters into gentle families.

I shall not attempt to record our daily proceedings. We suffered much from bad or dishonest guides, and so occasionally lost our way in the dense jungle. We had frequent little skirmishes with the enemy, who showed their ignorance of war by not inflicting serious loss upon us. It often occurred to me with what ease I could have destroyed my column had I been in command of the enemy. We had at one time to remain halted for five days on a filthy wet nullah waiting for supplies, of which we began to run out. The evening we reached this nullah we all bathed in it, and when swimming and enjoying its muddy waters after a very hot march my companion suddenly came upon a dead body floating in it. This was the water we drank for the five days we were halted there! Is it to be wondered at that we suffered from cholera? We had there one pretty little

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

afternoon with the enemy, in the course of which we took some pits they had dug to fire from upon our bivouac. During the skirmish we killed a couple of their black water-buffaloes which gave all the detachment a good meal of fresh beef. It was very tough, but it was a great change after that salt red navy-junk upon which, until then, we had lived during the expedition.

On March 17 we resumed our march, and the Royal Irish Regiment celebrated their Saint's Day by the brilliant capture of an entrenched position, in which they had an officer killed.

Upon the evening of March 18, we had scarcely settled down into our bivouac in the dense jungle through which our route lay, when a thick fog fell upon us. We knew we were close to the enemy, for all through the night we could hear their voices and the noise of their dahs as they cut and hacked in adding to the stockade which surrounded Meeah-Toon's village and final position. We were certain that every effort had been made to strengthen it, and with their known skill at such work we felt it would be a hard nut to crack. Camp rumour told us that a wet nullah lay in its front, but the belief that in taking it we should also take the great chief's village and so wipe out the disgrace of Lock's disaster, made us hope it would be a happy, perhaps a glorious end to the expedition. Cholera still pursued us, food was bad and scarce, and owing to the thickness of the jungle and the consequent restricted nature of our nightly bivouacs, few ever had a really good night's rest. Speaking from my own experience, I was so constantly on picket that my sleep was mostly obtained in the early mornings during the intervals between dawn and the beginning of the day's march, and during all the short halts occasioned on the march

## WITH THE ADVANCED GUARD

by some stoppage in front. It seemed to me that I was on outlying picket on most nights during the expedition, when I did not dare even to lie down lest tired nature should give way and sleep seize upon me. In many ways I enjoyed this picket work, for I thoroughly understood its theory and was rapidly learning its practice. But what pleased me most about it was the feeling of responsibility it conferred. I flattered myself with the belief that upon my exertions then, and upon the way in which I carried out my duty, depended the safety of our bivouac and perhaps of the whole enterprise. This filled me with pride, and young ensign though I was, it flattered my self-consciousness. But the result of this night-work was, that during the subsequent day's march I occasionally fell asleep for an instant of time as I walked, and was as suddenly awakened to consciousness by a bad stumble when for a moment I had some difficulty in keeping erect. Most officers know what it is to be asleep on horseback when on the line of march. When upon a steady horse, with elbows well planted on the holster-pipes, one can thus have many a good five minutes' doze. But who that has ever slept under those conditions does not remember the neck-dislocating shock with which you wake when on the point of quitting your saddle and of parting company altogether with the animal that carries it! And so also was the shock I experienced many a time during these marches on foot, when I woke in the act of falling, only saving myself with difficulty from an ugly tumble.

It was the turn of the 80th Regiment to find the advanced guard the following morning—March 19—and as I was not to be on picket that night, I was told off to command the advanced party when the march began. I was in the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

seventh heaven of delight at this prospect. We knew we should have fighting, and most probably end the expedition by the storming of the chief's great stronghold. As I lay down to sleep in my cloak that night I prayed earnestly to God for His protection and that He should be with me in all I did the following day. Soon after dark the usual heavy fog fell upon us and I was quickly fast asleep, too soundly for any thought. Never throughout my life have I been the dreamer of dreams whilst asleep. I suppose a healthy good digestion enabled me to sleep too profoundly for any thoughts or nightmares when once death's image had embraced me either by day or night.

Upon the first streak of light I was on my feet. The heavy fog still surrounded us, and we could not see a hundred yards either backwards or forwards along the jungle path upon whose sides we had bivouacked. The only sound in the air was the cutting and chopping of wood in the enemy's direction, whence also came at times the noise of voices as if of orders given. After the usual poor breakfast and the most meagre of toilets, I was ready "for the road." I don't think we formed up and moved off until about 7 a.m., when the sun had somewhat lightened the fog. What is now commonly called the "point of the advanced guard" consisted of four privates and myself. None of us were twenty years of age, and all were recruits. I knew theoretically the duties of an advanced guard, but had no experience, nor had I ever been drilled in the practice of such duties. Indeed I knew very little of any sort of drill. We moved in the strictest silence along a track with dense jungle on either side, catching now and again a passing view of a nullah that ran parallel to it about twenty-five yards on our right. We occasionally reached a spot where the enemy had recently

## MEEAH-TOON'S POSITION

had a fire. The Burmese were not an enterprising foe, and never worried us at night, though without doubt they constantly worked round our flanks and rear in small scouting parties through the jungle or along paths known only to them. But during this advance, although we could distinctly hear them chopping and felling trees, we saw nothing of them until after an hour's extremely slow marching, with constant halts, we reached a point where the path turned suddenly at right angles to the left. There the wet nullah we had been following joined another and apparently a larger stream, on the other side of which we could see the enemy's stockade plainly, and within about a hundred yards of us.<sup>1</sup> They had apparently no pickets thrown out to their front, and were consequently quite unconscious of our close proximity. The absence of any path leading down to the nullah near us proclaimed it to be unfordable. All orders I received were brought to me by messengers from the rear, and we now spoke only in whispers. We could hear the enemy talking volubly on the other side of the nullah along which we now marched, for a fog seems to carry sound with distinctness, and the constant noise of chopping told us they were still hard at work upon their stockades. As the fog lifted, by peering through the jungle I could see their works along the other bank of the nullah, which seemed to be about eighty yards from me. I was ordered, as I turned to the left along the path by the newly-discovered nullah, to move slowly and to be careful not to show myself and to maintain strict silence. Major Holdich came to me with these orders before we turned off to the left, and he then went back to the main body. I felt very

<sup>1</sup> From subsequent measurements taken of it, we found that, from right to left, it extended 400 yards.



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

much as if I were once more playing at hide and seek in some plantation at home during evening twilight.

Our halts became more frequent, I suppose on account of the difficulty in closing-up the rear of the column, where our two guns and the native carts with the ammunition were frequently in trouble. As the day grew brighter I could see considerable numbers of Burmese on the far bank, one or more being mounted and evidently men of importance. My orders were to advance as far as I could without being seen, and on no account to fire until fired upon. During one of our many halts, when expecting every moment to be discovered, I had one of these mounted Burman leaders covered with a "Brown Bess" musket for some time, and longed to loose-off at him. However, I fully realized the importance of getting further up the nullah unperceived to the point where I was told we should be able to cross it. It struck me as immensely strange that an intelligent enemy in their own jungle should allow us to march unperceived along the front of their position, by a path running parallel to it and within eighty or a hundred yards of their stockade. It did not speak well for their warlike instincts or military training. But the fact was, they had no idea we should quit our bivouac in their neighbourhood until the sun had risen high enough to clear off the dense fog which usually hung all the morning over the jungle. I remember well during one of our hundred-and-one halts, as I sat cross-legged on my sword with my four boys lying down by me, all keenly watching the enemy's proceedings beyond the nullah, how I wondered to myself if I should be killed or wounded that day—a common thought to those whose minds are unemployed upon such occasions. Being well in front, I felt that I was at least bound to be in at the death.

## BENGAL NATIVE INFANTRY

As we advanced the nullah seemed to get somewhat narrower, the water in it less deep, and its banks, especially on our side, less steep.

At length the enemy became suddenly aware of our presence, and opened fire upon us all along their line. The whiz of bullets and the sound of their thud into the stems of trees about us at once added enlivenment to the position. Their fire was too high, and it was not until we began to form up to our right, facing the enemy, that I saw any one fall near me, but before the place was taken all the four boys with whom I started in the morning were hit. The detachments of British troops were now withdrawn into the jungle and formed into line facing the enemy's works; our two guns, which had been far behind, were now brought up and into action. The plot thickened, and the position became exciting. I do not remember all the particulars of what took place, indeed the jungle was so thick I could see little beyond what was going on immediately round me. We were ordered to advance at last, why or for what purpose I know not, but the advance is well marked in my memory, because we had to pass over a line of the 67th Bengal Native Infantry, then lying down. They seemed in an abject funk, and I believe could not be got on by their gallant officers. As we passed over them, our men abused them in strong terms, which they seemed in no way to resent. There was a very fat soubadar lying prone with his head and body as close to mother earth as his fat stomach would admit of, where I crossed this line of sepoys. My knowledge of Hindostani was then most limited, and as is generally the case with men lately arrived in India, it consisted chiefly of very coarse terms of abuse. These I freely hurled at this cowardly native officer, whilst with all my might I

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

kicked the most protruding part of his body as I passed over him.

About this time my chum, Lieutenant Wilkinson, of the South Stafford, was shot through the arm, and his bone badly smashed. I tied it up quickly, as best I could, with the silk pocket-handkerchief I had been using as a sword knot, but the wound was a very bad one. In the *mêlée* I found myself for a little in the midst of a Sikh regiment. What a brave lot they were! and such a contrast to the cowardly Hindostanees of the 67th Bengal Native Infantry Regiment, who would do nothing, and who, like their native officer I have mentioned, persisted in lying down on the ground to avoid the bullets. This was the first time a battalion of Sikhs under British officers had been in action, and all were anxious to see what they would do. They were an example of splendid daring to every one present. It was then I saw their commanding officer, Major Armstrong, knocked over by a bullet that hit him at the top of his forehead, which it smashed, and, to all appearances, lodged in his brain. It was a dreadful wound, but, strange to say, it did not then kill him.

About this time, some one in authority, perhaps the general, arrived on the scene, and it was discovered that the nullah shallowed out and was quite dry to our left front where the regular path to Meeah-Toon's village led across it. The British detachments were by this time tolerably well mixed up together without any order whatever, and the noise of the firing made it difficult to hear anything or make oneself heard. However, a storming party were called for and that was just what I longed for. Another officer, Lieutenant Allan Johnson—afterwards a very distinguished man—also volunteered. Collecting as many men as possible,

## LEAD A STORMING PARTY

we started down that narrow nullah path at a good fast double, the two officers leading. The two naval guns, abandoned unspiked by the navy in poor Captain Loch's disaster, were firing as quickly as they could be fired down the path, whilst the enemy thronged the stockade and firing as quickly as they could load, shouted to us in Burmese "Come on! Come on." But we were doing well, the pace was good and steady, and I soon realized there was no water to be crossed along the path before us. Lieutenant Allan Johnson and I cheered lustily as we charged, the men behind doing so also—the noise was great. For the moment I was in a heaven of ecstatic excitement when the ground suddenly gave way under me, and owing to the pace I was going at I fell with some violence four or five feet into a trap-hole that had been cleverly covered over with brushwood and earth. I must have struck some stake in it, as for the moment I was dazed, and more or less knocked out of time. Quickly coming to myself, I jumped up—as was natural—on the enemy's side of this *trou-de-loup*, but, horror of horrors! my storming party had melted away and I found myself alone, whilst I was greeted with yells from the enemy close at hand. The position was awkward, but my mind was clear and prompted me to jump back at once into the pit for shelter whilst I collected my still somewhat scattered senses. My thoughts as I lay in that *trou-de-loup*, are not amongst my pleasant memories. Not more than thirty yards from me the enemy were in large numbers shouting and in the enjoyment of their momentary victory calling out to us to "come on!" Their fire became brisk, and it struck me they delivered it in volleys. If I remained where I was I felt that any Burmans sallying out would have me at their mercy. I had dropped the pistol

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

a brother ensign had lent me before leaving our bivouac, and a tailor-provided sword was my only weapon. I quickly realized that, come what may, I must run back; it was my only chance. I have no idea of how many minutes I was in that pit, but it seemed an age at the time, and long, long ago though it be, and many as the tight places have been in which I have since found myself, none recall such indelible, such disagreeable memories. The horror of having to run for my life is still present with me as if these events had occurred but an hour ago. Nothing is more burned into my recollection than the dread of being shot in the back, for run away I felt I must; it was my only chance, and not a minute was to be lost. I waited until I thought the enemy had emptied most of their muskets in a volley, and then jumping up, I ran as I never ran before or since. Out of breath, I threw myself on the ground amongst my comrades when I reached the line of redcoats, with some little feeling of shame in my heart at being thus seen in the act of running away. I ought to have thanked God for my escape, but I was in the vilest of tempers, for I felt the men behind me had not behaved well. Had they pressed forward as they should have done when I was caught in the trap, we should have taken the place in another five minutes. But they were undrilled recruits, and there were too few of us, and there was not enough backing-up from behind. Had a formed company with its officers been there, the whole thing would have been over in a very few minutes, as I have already said. As for me, I felt ashamed of myself and surprised at the conduct of the boys who had failed to back me up as they should have done. I thought this then, but don't think so now, for I did not then know how to fire men around me with courage.

## LEAD A STORMING PARTY

Sir John Cheap and Major Reid, of the Bengal Artillery, now came up, and our one howitzer and one 9-pounder gun were sent for. Fire was opened from them at very short range, and I remember how much I admired the coolness and indifference to the enemy's bullets displayed by Lieutenant Magrath of the Madras Artillery and the others who served them.<sup>1</sup> For each round, the gun was laid just as it would have been at any ordinary target practice at home.

While this was going on, parties of the Royal Irish and of the King's Own Light Infantry kept arriving, and the remainder of the 80th detachment joined those already with me in front. All were, however, much mixed up, as the jungle prevented any regular formation. Our shell fire, it was thought, had made some impression, and the general called for another storming party. Naturally, I jumped up, saying I knew the way, having been over it before, and a Lieutenant Taylor, of the Madras Native Infantry, who was interpreter to the King's Own Light Infantry, said he would go also. I had made his acquaintance the day before to tell him I had in my baggage a small parcel for him from a cousin at home. I collected all the 80th men I could, and having warned Taylor of the *trou-de-loup* into which I had fallen when leading the previous storming party, off we started with a yell, every one near us cheering lustily. We all ran forward at a good pace under what seemed to be a well-sustained fire from the enemy's works. I could see a considerable number of them on the top of the parapet or stockade, and above all the noise one heard their defiant shouts of "Come on! Come on!" in the Burmese tongue. What a supremely delightful moment it was! No one in cold

<sup>1</sup> That gallant Irishman is now a general, and I am proud of being still the friend of so brave a soldier.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

blood can imagine how intense is the pleasure of such a position who has not experienced it himself ; there can be nothing else in the world like it, or that can approach its inspiration, its intense sense of pride. You are for the time being, and it is always short, lifted up from and out of all petty thoughts of self, and for the moment your whole existence, soul and body, seems to revel in a true sense of glory. The feeling is catching, it flies through a mob of soldiers and makes them, whilst the fit is on them, absolutely reckless of all consequences. The blood seems to boil, the brain to be on fire. Oh ! that I could again hope to experience such sensations ! I have won praise since then, and commanded at what in our little Army we call battles, and know what it is to gain the applause of soldiers ; but, in a long and varied military life, although as a captain I have led my own company in charging an enemy, I have never experienced the same unalloyed and elevating satisfaction, or known again the joy I then felt as I ran for the enemy's stockades at the head of a small mob of soldiers, most of them boys like myself.

We were getting on well when we reached the broken-down trap-hole into which I had fallen an hour or so before. Taylor went to its left, I to its right, and just a few paces beyond it, I saw him tumble head over heels, and at a few paces farther on, when running hard, I turned a somewhat similar somersault. It was, I suppose, the pace I was going at that caused me, as I fell heavily, to do this. In a second I was sitting up, shot as I afterwards found by a large jingall bullet through the upper part of my left thigh. I tried to stop the bleeding with my left hand, and remember well seeing the blood squirting in jets through the fingers of my pipe-clayed gloves. I cheered and shouted, and waved

## BADLY WOUNDED

my sword, calling upon the men to go on. There was a splendid fellow behind me, Sergeant Quinn, of the 80th, whom I have already mentioned. Seeing how badly I was hit, he wanted to help me back. Any attempt to do so would have been the end of at least that storming party, so I shouted all the louder, "go on, go on," and this he did in splendid style. In a few minutes he and those he led—for he was then in command—had clambered up the roughly-constructed stockade and the garrison bolted. Some more men coming up from the rear carried poor Taylor and put him beside me, where he bled to death. He too was shot through the thigh, the bullet in his case cutting the femoral artery. Mine was a remarkable escape. A doctor soon arrived on the scene and put on a tourniquet, which hurt me, but allowed me to be moved. I had lost blood heavily, and was consequently extremely weak. I passed a bad night through weakness and mosquitoes in a hut in Meeah-Toon's village, and the following morning I was taken off in a man-of-war's boat. Winding a devious passage down a creek, we had to saw and cut away piles and other obstructions placed there by the enemy. More than once before our boat reached the open river, the enemy's skirmishers showed themselves, and appeared inclined to show fight. A little skirmishing took place, and they finally cleared off. I was at times left almost alone with a few other wounded, and my helpless condition made me realize how easily the enemy might cut our throats. The idea was unpleasant. The lieutenant, or mate, who commanded the pinnace was kindness itself to me, and gave me a complete change of clothes, which was a real luxury. All the things I had on were filthy and covered with blood, and I saw them thrown overboard with much pleasure.



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

I was soon on board a flat towed by a steamer, but the coupling was so contrived that you could step from one to the other. All the wounded were placed on the deck round its outer edges, and the doctors lived and messed in the middle. Some few days were thus passed on the river voyage to Prome. My chief recollection of it is of my extreme weakness. The tourniquet round my thigh had been slackened (oh! what a relief), but it was for some weeks kept round the wounded limb so that the soldier who was always close to me could screw it up in a moment, should the artery, affected by the great sloughing of the wound, suddenly burst. I frequently remained awake most of the night, for once awake the smell from my own wound, and from those of the men around me, was so offensive that I could not get to sleep again. In those days the doctors starved wounded men to keep down inflammation, and I remember how hungry and greedy I felt each day when the doctors, laughing and eating and drinking in our midst, would not even let me have a piece of roast chicken they were eating, and the smell of which was so tantalizingly tempting. The big wounds like mine were dressed twice a day, and a disgusting operation it was. I shall not enter into details, but those who have been wounded in temperate climates can know nothing of what misery it was in those days to be wounded through the body or through the thigh in an extremely hot country like Lower Burmah.

The wounded were landed late in Prome, and in the dark my dhooley-bearers fell. In my extreme prostration I felt the shock much. The troops were being hutted, and I was put into a little quarter that had been built for an officer. The wounded rank and file were in large Indian double tents,

## SENT HOME

where at noon the thermometer sometimes registered 130° Fahr. The most it ever rose to in my hut was, I think, 109°. I had a bad time of it for some weeks, for a sort of cholera seized upon me, and for days I hung between life and death. But it is difficult to kill a strong young fellow under twenty. Oh ! how tiring to lie awake at night when prostrated with weakness, mental and bodily ! How I longed for the first note of the “reveillé” every morning, for it announced that one more horrible night had come to an end. All the prominent events of my stay in Burmah are still remembered, and they interest me when at times I recall them after this long lapse of years.<sup>1</sup>

When well enough to be moved—I don’t remember how many weeks it took—I was sent to Calcutta and thence home by long sea round the Cape in the steamer *Lady Jocelyn*. We called at Madras and Point de Galle for passengers, and then made for the Mauritius.

As our big and stately steamer entered the harbour of Port Louis in that island, the intense greenness and rich loveliness of its surroundings impressed me much. Coming from the sea, the beauties of nature strike the visitor more forcibly than when they are approached by land. The harbour of very blue water was filled with ships, great and small, a man-of-war being of the number. In near shore the smaller vessels were so numerous that their masts resembled a close but leafless wood. Above them were the

<sup>1</sup> In winding up his report of our proceedings on March 19, Major Holdich—now General Sir E. A. Holdich, K.C.B.—wrote as follows : . . . “ I would beg to bring to your especial notice the conduct of Ensign Wolseley, a young officer who has but lately joined the service, who not only distinguished himself by his gallantry in leading the storming party, but by his judgment in marking the weak part of the breastwork whereby the breach was effected.”

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

ramparts with bastions and outworks whose masonry escarps were visible from the sea, all being closely studded with masonry-faced embrasures from each of which peeped out the black muzzle of a gun. White houses showed themselves on all sides in the midst of rich tropical vegetation. Behind was the town, and beyond it the bluest of mountain ranges whose most remarkable feature was "Peter Bot," with its curiously-shaped hat, the ascent of which is deemed a great feat of strength and of cool-headed determination. Fort Louis has long remained in my memory as one of the most lovely of coloured pictures. Nowhere else have I seen the sea, the earth and the sky combined together into a scene so pleasing to the eye that loves harmony in colour. I tried in vain to copy the scene in my sketch-book, but gave it up as hopeless. A cobalt coloured misty atmosphere, tinged with rose-madder, seemed to hang between you and all you looked at. It was in the sky and in the sea, and lent a hazy, lazy, dreaming, restful tone to everything around you, overwhelming you with positively sensuous enjoyment. In many places the large and graceful leaves of the banana and the boughs of flowering evergreens seemed to bend forward as it were to watch—perhaps admire—their reflections in the bright sea beside them.

The sea-front when seen from the ship, looked a puzzling assortment of works bristling with guns, whose muzzles like sentinels seemed to follow your every movement. Upon landing, it was curious in an English colony to find the inhabitants talking French. Having just come from a land where I had daily tried to think in Hindostani, I fear I interlarded my French so much with that mongrel language that I had some difficulty in making the Mauritian cab-

## ST. HELENA

driver understand when I asked him to take me to the supposed burial-place of Paul and Virginia, the infant hero and heroine of our childhood.

The men in garrison there were healthy, but rum was cheap, and consequently there was much drunkenness. As however, few of our soldiers then could read and write, and had not therefore many amusements, this was not to be wondered at.

Our next calling-place was Cape Town, then still beautiful and undisfigured with its present hideous docks and ugly streets made still uglier by crowded tramcars. Nature created the Capetown Peninsula beautiful with its lovely deep water bay and its glorious background of Table Mountain. Man has striven hard to render it hideous, and has already gone far towards robbing it of its inherent beauty.

After leaving the Cape of Good Hope we called at St. Helena and St. Vincent. These visits did much to break the monotony of a long journey by sea, and above all things enabled me to visit Napoleon's first burial-place. Bad as he was, his career has always fascinated me in a way and to a degree which that of no other mortal has ever done. His name and achievements were associated with my earliest lessons in history, and had filled me with ambition, perhaps an unhealthy ambition. The cold-blooded Wellington, the great statesman, soldier and patriot, was our national hero, but largely, I think, because he was the man who had defeated the great Corsican disturber of the world. I had often gazed with childish interest at an old coloured picture of Napoleon's St. Helena tomb whilst lost in astonishment at the blueness of the weeping willow which sheltered it. His life and doings have an attraction for the young of all nations which the history of no one else excites, although

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

he lacked most of the virtues that are instilled into the Englishman as soon as he can learn anything. For truth, and the honour which is based on truth and begotten by it, he cared nothing. But notwithstanding my insular prejudices on such points, I have always felt he was the most remarkable human being known to history. The lawgiver, Moses, the chosen leader of his people, comes in many ways near him ; but Napoleon was Moses and Aaron and Joshua all in one.

As I landed in the little decaying port of Jamestown, my thoughts involuntarily carried me back some thirty-seven years to the day when that great man had stepped ashore upon the lovely spot we had selected to be his prison for life. Is the world ever again to possess so great a ruler ? If there be a spot on earth where man can best moralize on the vanity of human ambition, surely it is in that little island far away from the busy hum of man where lived and suffered, lied and acted, posed and died, this Colossus amongst human beings. When I then visited and sketched the prettily situated cottage in which he breathed his last, it was used as a farm house, and the farmer had divided the principal rooms into two storeys, the upper one being used as a hay loft. The garden was a mass of weeds, and there was an uncared-for look about the place that made one sad. I thought we should not, for the sake of the small rent to be obtained for it, turn to such uses the last home of the most bitter and powerful of our enemies, and the greatest man who had ever ruled his kind. Between him and universal dominion England had at one time stood alone. We fought him on sea and land : we destroyed his power, and we most properly immured him where he could not escape to harass mankind again. But in all our dealings with him

## ST. HELENA

we should have remembered what he had been, we should have borne with his play-acting, made greater allowance for his character and temptations, his grievances, self-created or not, and the part and character he had determined to play as our prisoner. Moreover, we should never have allowed the house in which he died and the grounds around it where he sauntered, and doubtless pondered over the might have been, to degenerate into the dirty home of a local and unappreciative farmer. Surely there is no sentiment in an English Ministry. But I must not omit to say that our first duty, a duty we owed to the world, was to take care that by no calculable possibility should he ever escape. We accepted a great responsibility, a disagreeable, a thankless obligation, and on the whole we have no serious reason to be ashamed of the manner in which we discharged it. His simple tomb in the reposeful little green valley he had chosen for it, impressed me much more than I had ever been moved by the splendid mausoleum where his bones now rest. Both were made by men alien to him in race and language. One, by the men of the nation he hated and feared most ; the other by a former great ruler of France, *Le Roi Soleil*, who, like Napoleon, would, I think, have achieved universal dominion had it not been for the fighting qualities of our race, and for the wisdom of Queen Anne's great general who knew how to make the most of them.

I have always loved to pore over the pages of Plutarch and to study the comparisons he draws so well between the characters of those he usually classes together. But surely impartial men will for ever put Napoleon by himself and in front of all human beings. In judging his character we must never forget that in morality he had no better standard than that preached by Macchiavelli ; the exigencies of the

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moment, or of the intrigue or business he had in hand, decided his course of action, which was absolutely untrammelled by any fixed laws of right or wrong, by any consideration for others. Personal success, pure and simple, was his aim. In war, all rules which guide honourable men in the daily actions of peaceful life are necessarily ignored. We must break no compact entered into with an enemy, but short of breaking a promise made, we leave no stone unturned whereby we may deceive him. But Napoleon's conduct in peace as well as in war was directed along the lines which all great captains adopt both in battle and in preparing for it. He could estimate and value natural ability in others and knew well how to use to his own advantage those who possessed it. But he could never distinguish between right and wrong, or see in them antagonistic principles in the conduct of public affairs. His mind seems to have been incapable of understanding where or how the unwritten code of honour comes in to calculations between man and man or between nation and nation. The man who would deceive others in the daily business of life by forged telegrams, or even by the deliberate publication of false news, would, I believe, be turned out of our Stock Exchange. But all such practices are fully justified in war, and Napoleon could not apparently perceive why a practice that was recognized as fair in war should be denounced as immoral in peace.

When I reached England I was able to walk fairly well, and a long and interesting visit to Paris made me forget the misery my wound had caused me.

## CHAPTER IV

### Go to the Crimea—Join the Light Division,

1854

SOON after my arrival in England I obtained my lieutenancy, and was transferred in that rank to the 90th Light Infantry. I joined it in Dublin, and there learnt a little drill, of which I had been previously profoundly ignorant.

Our colonel was a handsome fine-looking old soldier, but in no respect a scientific warrior. He was a Staffordshire man, and heir to a property that had been in his family for many centuries. We were not anxious to retain him, but neither of the majors was thought to be good enough for the command of such a regiment. One of our majors left and was replaced by a first-rate soldier, who although he knew nothing of light infantry manœuvres as practised in those days, and could never drill us, was a "real" soldier, and a credit to us and to the Army. Three years afterwards, as Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell, he met a soldier's death when gallantly and ably leading the battalion at General Havelock's great "Relief" of Lucknow.

To those who only know our Army as it exists now, it may be interesting to hear something of our musketry practice before the Crimean War. When in Dublin we fired by companies, a fixed number of rounds per man annually,



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on the space left uncovered at Sandymount during low tide. The range was, I think, 100 yards, and the target about six feet high by two and a half wide, was of white calico, stretched over an iron framework. The men, especially the recruits, hated firing "old Brown Bess," which kicked horribly, and which, unless pressed very firmly against the shoulder, always threw the muzzle up when fired.

In the early spring of 1854 the new Minie rifle was given to us. Months were spent in teaching the men how to aim with it, and we were ordered to send an officer to one of the newly opened schools of musketry to learn the theory and practice of rifle shooting. No one cared much about going there, and it was thought an excellent joke when a one-armed officer was selected for the purpose.

The Army at first did not attach much importance to this serious matter of re-armament. We were all too thoroughly ignorant of war and of tactics to comprehend the complete change the rifle was soon to make in the fate of battles, and even in our mode of fighting. All soldiers knew that the Duke of Wellington had to the last resisted the introduction of the rifle musket, and there could be no appeal from his decision. He believed in the volley delivered at close quarters, and quickly followed by the bayonet charge, in which the superiority of the British soldier was instantly apparent. It was a mode of fighting peculiar to us, and had won many a victory for England. Our military histories had taught us to believe in "Brown Bess" as the soldier's fetish. With a bayonet fixed, it became the clumsy pike with which we had so often charged and overthrown Napoleon's finest legions, and, above all things, it was believed to be the weapon best calculated to develop the hand-to-hand fighting qualities and spirit of our men.

## FREEMASONRY

Dublin was then a dreary quarter for a man like me who could not afford to hunt, and whose wounded leg prevented him from dancing. Its fragrant (?) river, its quays lined with decaying houses, its squalid streets, made it an undesirable and depressing place of residence. I joined my regiment in Ship Street Barracks, situated in one of the filthiest quarters of the town, though upon one side the barrack buildings joined the Castle. There were two clubs to which almost all my brother officers belonged ; one was the United Service Club in Stephen's Green ; the other the Victoria Yacht Club at Kingstown Harbour. There was always a good deal of play going on in the garrison ; it was high play for men like myself, whose means were small. I avoided unlimited loo, in which " big nights " at mess occasionally ended, and as I only played whist I kept my losses within bounds. But as it was, the money I lost at it would have enabled me to have kept at least one horse whilst I was quartered in Dublin. During the summer, as a rule, very few dined in barracks ; most of us, I amongst the number, generally dined at the Kingstown Yacht Club, where the food was good, and it was extremely pleasant after dinner to sit out and have one's coffee in the open air.

During my period of service in Dublin in 1854 I was initiated as a Mason in Lodge No. 728, and under a special dispensation was raised to Master's Degree when under age. Upon returning to Ireland in 1890 as Commander of the Forces, I rejoined that Lodge, and was its Master for two years. I have often been asked if I could point to any advantage any one ever secured from being a member of that most ancient of crafts. My answer has always been that the only wounded officer left in the Redan, on

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September 8, 1855, who was taken by the Russians to their hospital in the city, was Captain Herbert Vaughan, of the 90th Light Infantry. This advantage he secured by making himself known as a Mason to the first Russian officer who approached him as he lay badly shot through both legs. The officer said to him in French that he regretted he could not himself go back with him, but would send some men to carry him to the great hospital in rear. There we found him two days afterwards, dying from his wounds. He lived long enough, however, to tell this interesting story.

About this time war was declared with Russia. A feeble and incapable Government had committed us to a most serious undertaking, for which we were in no way prepared. The Czar, misled by some foolish Quakers and others of the peace-at-any-price party, believed their nonsense, and thought that nothing would induce us to fight. This made war inevitable.

No nation was ever committed to a great foreign war for which it was so unprepared. Mr. Bright and the manufacturers of his school had long thought that the surest way to keep England out of all European wars, was to have no army capable of fighting. Almost all the Civil departments which feed an army in the field, and administer to its daily wants, had long since been abolished on so-called economical grounds, and everything that could be done by contract was so done. I remember that the first time my battalion had seen tents since it returned, years before, from the Cape, was one day at a camp drill in the Phoenix Park. It was amusing to find that the tents were brought from the military storehouses to the ground where they were to be pitched, in the ordinary one-horse dung carts of the town

## OUR ARMY UNPREPARED

driven by their owners for the job. We had then no military transport of any kind : and yet our Cabinet did not hesitate to declare war with one of the very greatest military nations in the world ! Sir Thomas Picton was popularly believed to have shot the last commissariat officer belonging to the Army for incompetence ; and although the *Army List* recorded the names of a few others said to be at the Cape and in our colonies, the Home Army, having never seen them, was inclined to disbelieve in their existence.

Every ordnance storehouse in Great Britain was ransacked in order to collect guns and harness and ammunition wagons for the ten batteries of horse and field artillery sent to the East for the war. We had, however, some weak battalions of excellent foot soldiers, and a few attenuated regiments of cavalry, the men of both arms being dressed and accoutred for show. We had no reserves of any kind, and in order to make up to their regulation field strength the thirty battalions of the Foot Guards and of the Line which constituted the Army sent to Bulgaria in 1854, the few battalions left at home were drained of their best men. Our men and officers were beautifully drilled, and would have delighted the heart of Frederick the Great. The officers, brave and gallant fellows, were ready to lead their men anywhere, and the men would follow them to the death. For the peace-preachers who manufactured rum, shoddy cottons, bad carpets, worse guns, and still worse powder for sale to the natives in or near our colonial and foreign possessions, this so-called Army had a supreme contempt. At that period, however, many of our cavalry regiments were largely supplied with the sons of these rich merchants as officers. Indeed, one regiment of great renown in former days was commonly known as the "Trades Union."

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

But we had been so long at peace that the British officer had ceased to dream of ever being engaged in any European war, and the ambitious amongst us saw little opening for their talents. All who could afford to live out of India hated the thought of going there, and yet it was the only place where there was much likelihood of seeing war, even against Asiatics. As soon as it was known for certain that the 90th Light Infantry must go to India, promotion had become brisk amongst us, for men began to leave the regiment. The 43rd and 52nd Light Infantry had been in Ireland with us, and all three regiments had been put under orders for India at the same time. None of those three had ever been to that land of mosquitoes, and it was a generally accepted rule that they were never to be sent there. But Lord Hardinge, who had become Commander-in-Chief, very properly dispelled these illusions, and put all the three regiments I have named under orders to go there. The first two were despatched, but for some reason the 90th were reprieved for a year, and this happy reprieve enabled us to get to the Crimea. The officers of the 43rd and 52nd exchanged largely into the Foot Guards, the Rifle Brigade and other regiments, but most of those in my regiment who would not go to India left the Army altogether. The result was a good deal of promotion between the date of being put under orders for India and our landing at Balaclava at the beginning of December 1854.

Amongst the officers of my regiment, nice fellows as they were, only a few cared much for the Army as a profession. All were proud of belonging to a splendidly drilled Light Infantry Battalion—drilled according to the practice of war in the Peninsula, before the introduction of the rifled musket. They thought themselves socially superior to the

## EMBARK FOR THE CRIMEA

ordinary regiments of the Line, which were always spoken of as "Grabbies." Many of them were well connected, and some were well off. It was in every respect a home for gentlemen, and in that respect much above the great bulk of Line regiments. But go to India few of them would. The position of some in the regiment prevented them from exchanging at once into regiments at home, but as soon as their promotion came they meant to do so. By far the best soldier amongst us was Captain Barnston, a dear good fellow in all respects; not lovely to look at, but able and clever. A squire of good means and of an old family, he had qualified at the Senior Department—the forefather of our present Staff College. To him and to me idling in Ireland was gall and wormwood when the great bulk of our Home Army had been sent to Turkey and then on to the Crimea. We were at last the only regular infantry left in Dublin, the other battalions doing duty there being English militia. Both of us seriously contemplated exchanging to a regiment in the field; the news of the Alma increased our feverish excitement and our longing to see active service against the Russians. On Sunday, November 12, the battalion was in the garrison church behind the Royal Barracks, when a paper was handed to the senior officer present, and by him sent round the officers' pew. It was an order for us to embark for the Crimea on the following Wednesday, the 15th. I could have shouted for joy, and few of us paid attention to the rest of the parson's sermon from that moment. This sudden order was the result of the news of the battle of Inkerman, and of our heavy losses there.

What a hubbub the barracks were in at once! The officers determined to leave all their gold wings, gold laced

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

coats, etc., etc., behind, and to obtain a sort of double breasted tunic, which had been just authorized for full dress. The men, however, retained their white wings and lace, for of course our Government could not be expected to rise to the emergency and clothe their soldiers in useful garments! The ship in which we were to embark was not ready for us until Sunday, November 19, when, just a fortnight after the battle of Inkerman had been fought, we embarked at Kingstown in the Cunard paddle steamer *Europa*, the captain's name being Leech. He was a thoroughly good fellow, a gentleman in all his ways and feelings, and he could not do too much for the comfort of the troops on board.

Being subaltern of the day when we embarked, I commanded the regimental guard, which marched in the rear of the battalion. All the men in front of me were at the "trail," so my small party attracted attention by their fixed bayonets, especially as I had charge of some eight or nine prisoners without arms. As we marched along the crowded quays which led from the Royal Barracks to the Kingstown railway station, great crowds surrounded us. These were increased in numbers by the people coming out of church, Mass being just over. The curious sympathy of the Irish with the distressed and the lawless when "run in" by the "cruel Saxon," here showed itself. Being a very British regiment our men had few friends amongst the inhabitants, but as soon as my prisoners attracted the mob's attention I found myself the centre of a crowd that regarded me as a jailer. "Poor boys," I heard on every side, whilst men and women scowled upon me. They did not care if the whole battalion were to be shot in the next Crimean battle, but their feelings were very different for

## MALTA

these prisoners. Many purses were handed to them, and they had a real ovation. They were assumed to be England's enemies because thus guarded, so of course they at once became the heroes, the dear friends, of the Dublin rabble. All mobs are cowardly, but I felt it was merely fear that kept this crowd of corner-boys and their friends from rushing my guard to release the half-dozen English prisoners in its charge.

We were somewhat crowded on board, but such was my joy at getting away that I would willingly have lived in the stokehole during the voyage as the price to be paid for the chance of seeing active service.

The captain had orders to make a quick voyage, and we were consequently soon in sight of Gibraltar, that English sentry-box where red-coated soldiers had kept watch and ward for a century and a half. The Mediterranean was blue and fairly calm, and as we ploughed through it towards the East the climate began to be extremely pleasant. The one topic of conversation on board was, should we be in time to see any war service? Should we reach the Crimea before Sebastopol fell? We put into Malta to coal, and learnt that Sebastopol was still a Russian garrison. I spent the day in visiting many places of antiquarian interest. I remembered Lord Byron's lines about it, and did swear at times as I mounted the "cursed steps of stairs," so common in the picturesque and by no means savoury streets. We halted again to coal at Scutari, having run up the Dardanelles by night, an achievement which few ships had previously accomplished, and not many captains would have then liked to attempt. We found Constantinople *en fête*, colours at every masthead, and at once jumped to the conclusion that Sebastopol had fallen, and that we were



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too late. But we shortly understood our mistake. All this show of bunting, etc., was in honour of the Bairam or some other Mohammedan festival. We were slow in coaling, and did not get under weigh again until the following morning at daybreak, as it was deemed impossible to attempt the passage of the Bosphorus by night. I was on the morning watch, and cold and dreary and rainy as was the weather, I enjoyed the scenery greatly, for every inch of shore was classic ground. Its great massive and loop-holed castles took my mind back to the fall of Constantinople, and I pictured to myself the unworthy Christians who lacked the courage to fight in its defence. Those amongst us to whom Gibbon's chapters on the subject were more enjoyable reading than all the novels ever printed, saw those shores then with redoubled interest.

It was a raw, misty morning, and the Bosphorus, which is lovely in nearly all weathers, was looking its worst. Here and there a sentry in a hooded "Grégo" was to be seen seeking shelter, if not warmth, in his box, or under the lee of some projecting angle of an imperial palace; but all other signs of life were absent, and the Turkish world was evidently asleep. As we neared Therapia, our ship steamed close to shore, where the deep channel, running within stone's throw of the bank, makes rather a sharp bend towards the south. The current there is very rapid, and catching the *Europa's* bow, checked her turning movement. For the moment she would not answer her helm and I thought we must go ashore. A long, three-storied terrace of wooden houses stood on the water's edge, and our ship, going straight on, drove its short stout bowsprit right into the western gable of this terrace, at about the height of the first floor. At that same moment our ship began to

## THE BOSPHORUS

turn slowly to starboard, razing, as she did so, several of the wooden houses in the row down to the first floor. The poor astonished Turks, thus roused from their sleep, were to be seen bolting from the tumbling ruins like bees from an overturned hive. The whole thing was over in less than it takes to tell the story, but as we could not at such a dangerous point of the navigation stop to inquire after the killed and wounded, we steered our course, and were soon steaming full power through what were at that season of the year the dreary waters of the Black Sea. Whether any men or women had been killed or hurt affected me little, for, with all the selfishness of youthful ambition, my very soul was filled with a longing to reach the Crimea without delay. This craving filled my mind at the moment to the exclusion of all other thought. It was a species of madness, but I was sane enough to feel that it was so, and to realize that it sprang from a personal longing for distinction, the outcome of an overwrought brain. I had brooded for months over the bad luck—which I exaggerated into the substance of an indignity—that whilst those in the Crimea were fighting for England I was left behind, condemned to lead a frivolous life in a home garrison. It is perhaps only a youthful mind constituted as mine was that can fully realize the misery, the sheer agony, I experienced during the autumn I spent in Dublin in 1854. The rebound of getting away at last was indescribable, and now, steaming fast towards the point round which all my thoughts centred, the world was bright, and, saving the dread of being too late, the cup of my joy was brimful.

From the mouth of the Bosphorus to Balaclava is about 280 miles, and the following day, the 3rd of December in

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the forenoon, we sighted the old Venetian towers overhanging the land-locked little harbour of Balaclava, in the pool-like waters of which we were soon berthed. The whole coast on each side of the entrance was a mass of wreckage, the result of the great and disastrous storm of the 15th of the previous month, of which we had heard at Constantinople. As soon as we were moored, several old acquaintances of the Light Cavalry Brigade came on board. I remember thinking they were poor creatures, for they all said they meant to go home as soon as possible. One said: "Don't come near me; we are covered with vermin; it is a hateful place, and nothing would tempt me to remain here." How I despised that fellow, and felt he was unworthy to be called an Englishman. These officers (!) had every night in bed; they did no trench work, and being encamped near Balaclava, were able daily to buy wine and good food. They told us a great deal of the Balaclava Charge, where all had certainly fought well, and had nobly led their men straight; but yet they lacked the manliness to bear for any length of time the hardships and discomforts their men experienced daily! He must be a craven indeed, who, being well mounted, would not charge home at the head of his own men. It is not thus the noblest form of courage is made manifest, but in the daily endurance of cold and want.

The dirt of tent life in a very windy wet and dreary winter, such as that we spent in trench-work before Sebastopol, is not pleasant. The absence of every comfort to which all classes at home are accustomed tries the temper, and tests the metal we are made of. But the vast majority of us who did so spend that winter, would rather have died a hundred deaths in misery and want than have given in,

## BALACLAVA

even at our worst epoch. When in subsequent years I met any poor hearted creatures who had sneaked on board ship, or to Scutari or to England on the plea of an extra pain in the stomach, I felt indignant at having to associate with officers who had so forfeited all claims to be regarded as gentlemen. How unworthy they were of the honour, the privilege, of commanding the British non-commissioned officer and private! But as my story goes on I shall have more to say of such unworthy fellows. How could they sleep at Scutari in clean sheets, or live at home with every comfort around them, knowing that the men of their own troops or companies were literally dying of want and misery before Sebastopol? During that winter we often lived on offal and garbage, but I am sure that none of us thought we were therefore objects of pity, or deserved praise on that account. Speaking for myself, all my sympathy was with the Rank and File; my heart was daily rent as I saw the privates die around me, because they had not the means of even buying the offal which my servant purchased weekly for himself and me from a friend who was a commissariat butcher. It is difficult, even after this lapse of time, to write in moderate terms of those commissioned creatures who, able to fight and work, crowded into our hospital ships, and, when they could do so, sneaked home to England, leaving others to do their duty. But what about that Civil Government of ours which sent an army to the Crimea without any means of carrying either food or wounded men! If the curses of brave men affect the future life of those who have injured them, many members of the Cabinet that sent us to the Crimea must now have uncomfortable quarters somewhere. And richly they deserve to be punished in the next world, for our Ministers

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are never adequately punished in this life for their public crimes in such cases. Was there ever a greater public crime than that of sending our little army to the Crimea, where so many died of want and of the diseases which want always engenders ?

But we are told that it was done through ignorance. Ignorance, forsooth ; and of what greater crime can a War Minister be convicted ? If he be ignorant, what right has he to fill a place and draw its emoluments when he lacks the knowledge required for the proper and useful discharge of its duties ? Yet this is still what we see ; a man who is not a soldier, and who is entirely ignorant of war, is selected solely for political reasons to be the Secretary of State for War. I might with quite as great propriety be selected to be the chief surgeon in a hospital. I have had some experience of wounds and operations, but those too often selected to be our Ministers of War know as much about war or soldiers as I do of abstruse theology. It is an infamous, a foolish system, and sooner or later it must land us in serious, if not in some disastrous, national calamity.

We were ordered to disembark at once, and encamp on the sloping ground to the north-west of the harbour—part of which, be it remarked, was an old graveyard ! We took leave of the captain and the chief officer of the *Europa*, to whom all ranks were most grateful for their unvarying kindness whilst we were on board. Each officer landed with his haversack full of tea, sugar, sardines, etc., etc., and whenever, subsequently, the *Europa* again came to the Crimea, a Southdown sheep or something good to eat was sent by her most generous and friendly captain as a present for the officers. In our turn, we presented him with a handsome gold watch as a memento of our successful

## CAMP AT BALACLAVA

voyage, and of the care he took of the battalion when on board his ship.<sup>1</sup>

We landed in boats, and as I stepped ashore I was surprised to see, close to my feet, a Minié rifle lying half in and half out of the water. It gave me a shock, for I knew how valuable those arms were at the time ; indeed, England possessed so few of them that we were sent to the Crimea with the old "Brown Bess" musket. It was to me mute evidence that all was not well with the soul, the spirit, of the Army in the field, and that already, to some extent, demoralization must have set in. Was it possible that our then rigid system of repressive discipline was unsuited to men under the strain of over-work with bad and insufficient food ? Upon examining the rifle to see what regiment it belonged to, I found it was marked, "G. Company, 90th Light Infantry." That was the company to which I belonged. It was one of those issued to us early in the year, but given back shortly afterwards because required for the little army which our Cabinet had, with a light heart, sent to fight the great military power of Russia ! There were not enough rifles in store to arm even that little force ! When will the civilians who rule England understand the absurdity of keeping on foot a small standing army, for which all the arms and military stores it would require in the field are not always available for issue ?

As soon as we were established in camp, kitchens made and fires lit, the great interest was to take stock of our nearest enemy, and through our glasses examine his position. General Liprandi then commanded the Russian force, occupying the Fiducan Heights, and the line of low hills

<sup>1</sup> My battalion, when landed, numbered twenty-nine officers and 814 N. C. officers and privates.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

from which the Turks had been beaten on October 25. In fact, he held the line of the Tchernaya River, having an advanced force pushed across it, with the apparent intention of threatening our base of supplies at Balaclava. If driven from that little harbour, we should have had to fall back upon the French base at Kamiesch, which could not be attacked until the allied navies had been destroyed. Balaclava was far from strong, though the Highland Brigade, under the splendid old soldier Sir Colin Campbell, was strongly posted on the heights to the east of the harbour. From his position there was a fine clear view over the plain between the Tchernaya and Balaclava. He was not a man to be caught napping, and had strengthened his position with redoubts, infantry parapets, and rifle shelters. H.M.S. *Sanspareille*, moored at the northern end of the harbour, commanded the direct line of approach from Liprandi's position to Balaclava. My battalion on the north-west of the harbour, with the guns of that man-of-war sweeping across our front, denied all access to the place from the village of Kadikoi, which was about a mile from us on the road leading to Sebastopol.

I bought a pony the day I landed, and the following morning, December 5, I started on him to have a look at Sebastopol. From Cathcart's Hill, just in front of the 4th Division Camp, I had a good view of the town, the harbour, the docks, and the forts protecting the place. Whilst engaged in examining all the many points of interest through my telescope, two Russian men-of-war, the *Vladimir* and another—whose name I don't remember—steamed out of the harbour, and, turning south, took up a position that enabled them to enfilade the French parallels, whose left more or less rested on the sea there. She poured a steady

## ATTACK BY RUSSIAN STEAMERS

fire of shot and shell into the French works and approaches, evidently keeping a good look out upon our fleet in the offing. Our admiral was unprepared for any such gallant audacity on the part of his naval enemy, for none of his ships had steam up, and before a couple of them could be got under weigh the Russian had ample time to hammer well the left of the French siege works. It was a remarkably pretty sight, and we all applauded the enemy's daring and swagger, and had a good laugh at the expense of our admiral, who had been thus caught napping. As soon as a couple of our ships were able to steam in the direction of the enterprising Russian, she paddled back slowly, and almost insultingly, to her moorings in the harbour, Forts Constantine and Alexander opening fire upon our foremost steamer, H.M.S. *Sampson*, to cover their retreat. I had taken my sketch book with me, and one of the few Crimean drawings I still possess is that which I made of this affair. Cathcart's Hill was even then tolerably full of our dead, and I was shown the graves of many gallant leaders who had fallen at Inkerman, the battle where we were surprised, and our army only saved from destruction by the timely arrival of French troops to help us. Good heavens! What generals then had charge of England's only army, and of her honour and fighting reputation! They were served to a large extent by incompetent staff officers as useless as themselves; many of them merely *flâneurs* "about town," who knew as little of war and its science as they did of the Differential Calculus! Almost all our officers at that time were uneducated as soldiers, and many of those placed upon the staff of the Army at the beginning of the war were absolutely unfit for positions they had secured through family or political interest. There were, of course, a few



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brilliant exceptions, but they made the incompetence of the many all the more remarkable.

After a few days' sojourn in camp at Balaclava, my battalion was sent to join the 2nd Brigade of the Light Division. A very muddy march took us to our destination. We encamped to the east of the Woronzoff Road, behind the old "Picket House," and sufficiently far down the reverse slope of the rising ground on which it stood to screen us from the enemy's observation. Our camp was nearly a mile and a half in rear of our first parallel, and about two miles and a quarter from the Salient of the Redan. The ground where we pitched our tents was very rocky, and we had some difficulty in driving home our tent-pegs, and in making the usual small trenches required round each tent. There were three officers with each company, the captain and his two subalterns, all of whom occupied one tent.

## CHAPTER V

### The Crimea—My First Night on Outlying Picket there, 1854

**I**T is not my intention to enter upon any history of the Siege of Sebastopol, the most important, the most curious of all such operations in modern times. Sufficient to say, that as I read the story of our invasion of the Crimea by the two allied armies, I am astonished at the reckless folly with which it was undertaken. The Emperor Napoleon III had enough soldiers to enable him to retrieve the great mistake then made in sending too small an army there: we had not. The consequence was that the French were able to end the war in triumph and with credit; whereas at the end of the war our battalions carried with them into the remotest provinces of the Empire where we maintain garrisons, the sad story of failure for which the British Ministers, not the British soldiers, were directly responsible. The Government in office had given our small army a task far beyond its power to accomplish. In olden times, when a British general failed in the field our practice was to remove him, and now we hear that in future he is to be tried by court martial. But since the days when we first adopted the system of responsible Ministers, we have never yet hanged, nor even tried, the Minister whose folly or stupidity led him to declare war when our Army

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was not fit to take the field. Most certainly the military force maintained by England when her Ministers declared war with Russia in 1854 could in no sense be justly called an army at all. It was not a "going military machine," any more than a steam engine is whose boiler is kept in Halifax, its cylinder in China, and its other machinery distributed in bits wherever the map of the world is coloured red, and for which machine neither water nor coals nor oil nor repairing tools are kept at hand. Our soldiers were magnificent fighting material ; no better have ever pulled a trigger in any war. But since 1815 the interests of what was styled " economy ! " were more attended to than the military efficiency of our troops, which were kept in isolated garrisons at home and abroad. They were most carefully drilled for theatrical effect, but not taught the practice of war. It had been deemed by Ministers, who ranked economy before efficiency, a useless expense to maintain in peace even the skeleton of a transport service.

The essentially military and naval city of Sebastopol lies south of the magnificent harbour of that name. It stands on a high, square block of land about a mile and a half long, from north to south, and about a mile and a quarter wide. Its eastern half was fairly well covered with streets and houses when the allied armies sat down before it.

On the east, that block is bounded by the Dockyard Creek, and on the west by Quarantine Bay. It was naturally a very strong place, but with the exception of several heavily armed coast forts and batteries to command the harbour entrance, the only attempt at fortification towards the south on the land side was a sort of large Martello tower that stood on high ground, something over 300 feet above sea level, and about two and a half miles south of the har-

## POSITION OF SEBASTOPOL

bour, and nearly the same distance east of the Dockyard Creek. This work was known as the Malakoff.

Sebastopol was naturally a strong place, and a number of heavily armed ships of war were anchored in the harbour, to assist with their fire in the event of a *coup de main* being attempted by us. Our fleet could not help the allied armies in any such enterprisc, for the Russians had sunk a number of ships at the mouth of the harbour, leaving only a narrow passage close to Fort Alexander for their own steam war vessels to pass out and in.

Upon the highest ground to the immediate north of the harbour there was a large star fort with masonry reveted ditches. It was but a poor work, and might possibly have been taken by a *coup de main* had we not been compelled to make the flank march we did to the south of the city, in order to secure possession of Balaclava Harbour as the immediate base for our army during the coming siege of Sebastopol.

The ground occupied by the English and French armies lies to the south of Sebastopol, and is a high rocky plateau, shaped like an isosceles triangle. Its sides are washed by the sea, its base faces eastward, inland, whilst its apex, Cape Chersonese, is to the west. Its northern side, ten and a half miles long, is indented by great bays, some of which stretch over a mile inland. It joins the base where the river Tchernaya falls into the eastern extremity of Sebastopol Harbour. The southern side of this triangle, about a mile longer than the northern side, is one unbroken coastline of great, steep and storm-washed cliffs, and may be said to join the base at a point about a mile south of the little village of Karani. Those cliffs, however, run on to the Harbour of Balaclava. The base of this triangle,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the highest part of the plateau, and rising at certain points to a height of five and six hundred feet above the sea, is about eight and a half miles in length. It is of steep access from the east throughout its entire length, except at the "Col" and in its immediate vicinity, where the road from Balaclava to our camp ascends the plateau. The steep slopes that form this base abound in strong military positions, facing eastward, but we had then few staff officers who were either competent to select them or to report upon their defensive capabilities.<sup>1</sup>

Of this triangular plateau we took the eastern portion with the land-locked Harbour of Balaclava as our immediate base, the French taking the western and larger half, with the Bays of Kamiesch and Kazatch as their harbours. What may be described as the dividing line between the two armies on this plateau was the Picket Ravine, which extends upwards from the head of Dockyard Creek for about four miles in a southerly direction, and ends at its source in the farm round the house that was Lord Raglan's headquarters, and where he died, broken-hearted I always thought.

The captain of my company had taken a University

<sup>1</sup> Before the Crimean War began there were few incentives for officers to study their profession scientifically. The great bulk of the staff at home, and most of those who had been selected for staff work with the army sent to Turkey, were chosen for family reasons. However, that was soon changed, for they were found to be mostly incompetent for all practical work in the field. Clever educated professional soldiers took their places according as vacancies occurred. I knew the officers well who were, as late as the fall of Sebastopol, the quarter-master-generals of two of our five divisions, and they were not men whom I would have entrusted with a subaltern's picket in the field. Had they been private soldiers I don't think any colonel would have made them corporals.

## ON PICKET

degree. I do not know what he had learnt thereby, but I do know that he had learnt nothing of a soldier's duties in the field. His men disliked him very much, for he took no manner of interest in their welfare. He knew the names of his colour-sergeant and of his servant, but I doubt if he knew the names of many others. He had no sympathy with his men nor with their feelings, and of course they were well aware of the fact. He knew his drill well, for in a Light Infantry Regiment that was essential, but of tactics or outpost duties he had no knowledge whatever.

A few days after our arrival in camp the company I belonged to was in orders for picket duty in the Middle Ravine the following morning. I did not then know where that ravine was, but I subsequently came to know it well as that which divided the two brigades of the Light Division. It was a twenty-four hours' tour of duty, and I was the only one in the company who had ever been on outlying picket before an enemy.

We "turned out" the next morning between four and five a.m., when it was pitch dark, raining hard, and both raw and cold. In every aspect the weather was unpromising, and no one appreciated having to leave his blankets and the shelter his bell tent afforded. Our adjutant appeared on the parade ground to see us start. He was a curious fellow, unpopular with both officers and men, and at heart no soldier. He disliked war, because, with Frederick the Great's father, he thought it spoiled the soldier's appearance and his drill, and even relaxed discipline. But he loved picturesque costumes, and had made for himself from the bearskin covering to his holster-pipes a headdress resembling that in which Robinson Crusoe was usually shown in the illustrated books of my childhood.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

He knew nothing of where the Middle Ravine picket was posted, so could give us no information for our guidance. At last, after waiting some little time, the Brigade Major appeared on the scene, if I may use such an expression, when no one could see much beyond his nose. It was amongst his duties to see the pickets furnished by his brigade duly posted; and as we were strangers just arrived in camp, and entirely ignorant of the localities about us, he should have either gone with us to this Middle Ravine, or found us a guide to take us there. But he too contented himself with giving us the vaguest description of how, as he put it, we "were certain to find it," and then, pointing into the dark in its supposed direction, he retreated from the rain to the shelter of his tent.

My reader, picture to yourself what your feelings would be if "turned out" very early on a cold raw morning, that was as dark as midnight, the rain falling heavily, and told to find your way to a distant point across a roadless Yorkshire moor, where there were no prominent landmarks, and no chance of meeting any one at such an hour from whom to ask the way. No moon and not a star to be seen that might possibly give you some indication of north and south, etc., and to feel you had to relieve a company expecting you, and that was naturally longing to get back to camp for some food and warmth after its twenty-four hours' tour of duty.

I have entered in some detail upon this story of my first picket before Sebastopol, because it illustrates the incompetence of a large proportion of those who had been selected for staff work at that early period of the Crimean War. A man at that epoch became known in his regiment as being "smart" if he could drill well, and had some knowledge

## FIRST NIGHT ON OUTLYING PICKET

of "The Queen's Regulations" and of the "Interior Economy" of a regiment. I don't know what our brigade major knew, but he certainly did not evince any intimate acquaintance with the staff duties of his office.

We started, and my captain left the rest to me. I naturally assumed that all the ravines which drained that side of the plateau upon which we were encamped must run down to Sebastopol Harbour, and as it was said to be the first ravine we should encounter, we had only to trudge along it until we should stumble upon the picket we were in search of.

The heavy rain had converted this ravine into a water-course through which we floundered in silence. The distance seemed interminable, and at last we had begun to imagine we must have got into the wrong ravine, and might soon find ourselves prisoners in Sebastopol. The position was unpleasant, when suddenly I heard the tramp of men coming towards us. The idea at once occurred that if we were on the wrong track this might possibly be a Russian patrol. I made my captain "front form" towards the supposed enemy, whilst I went forward with a file of men and challenged: "Who goes there?" A voice from the darkness answered in the richest of Tipperary brogues, "friend." It turned out to be half the company of the Connaught Rangers that formed the picket we were in search of. Its captain, tired of waiting for his relief, had upon his own authority sent home to camp half of his men, in order to have hot tea ready for the arrival of the other half. It was a dangerous thing to do, for as we were newcomers, left to find the Middle Ravine picket as best we might, it was quite on the cards we might have saluted our friends in the dark with a volley. Besides, daybreak



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

was the hour when outlying pickets require to be as strong as possible. But all our duties were slackly and badly performed then.

† We found the captain of the old picket in no very amiable mood at the tardiness of our arrival, and he took little trouble to give us any information regarding the duties we were to undertake. He and his men bundled off as quickly as possible, showing us, as he started, a hole amongst some rocks in the side of the ravine, in which he said the officers stayed. My captain must have been some eight years older than I was, but he let me do as I liked. He knew nothing about picket duties, and troubled himself little on the subject. This suited me in every way, and notwithstanding the rain and the discomfort, I found the duty and responsibility of the position quite after my own heart.

Although the Russians had houses to live in and plenty of firewood, still they too succumbed to the influence of the horrible wet and cold weather, and were not keen for night attacks whilst it lasted. They too must have suffered, though not a tithe of what we did. So carelessly was our outpost duty performed during the first winter, that our immunity from attack was not so much due to the precautions we took against surprise as to the badness of the weather, which prevented the Russians from attacking us. There was also the fact that we had taught them so severe a lesson upon the morning of Inkerman, about a month before ; they were not over anxious to cross bayonets with us so soon again. It rained upon us most of the day. Here and there time and running water had scooped out shallow open caves in the soft limestone rock which formed the sides of this Middle Ravine and of all the other ravines which ran down from our camps on the high plateau to the

## THE MIDDLE RAVINE PICKET

Harbour of Sebastopol. These afforded a little shelter, and in the best of them my unsoldierlike captain ensconced himself for his tour of duty, letting the men shift for themselves as best they could. I was left to make what arrangements I liked for the protection of the post, and to guard it against surprise. I enjoyed these responsibilities, for they gave me a feeling of importance. But what a bad example his conduct would have been to an ignorant young subaltern, and how bad it was for the non-commissioned officers ! All ranks in the company despised him as being no soldier.

During the day we collected what roots and brushwood we could to cook the men's dinner, and to provide us with some little fire during the long evening and night to follow. But it poured with rain at times, and the men, badly fed, were silent and depressed. A good glass of grog all round at dinner hour, however, did them much good. My dear good total abstainer, you would have thought so too had you been there. I think we had another "tot" with hot water and sugar about tattoo. Personally, I spent most of the night in visiting our sentries, and in peering from their posts into the heavy wet obscurity beyond, listening for any sound in front of feet splashing in the mud and running water of the ravine that stretched towards the enemy's position. We stood to our arms next morning sometime before daybreak and until our relief arrived, not quitting the position until it was broad daylight. This is the absolute rule upon such occasions, though often neglected at that time before Sebastopol.

I have described this, my first night upon outlying picket in the Crimea, for it was typical of the careless and ignorant manner in which our staff work was done by the uneducated, and too often the useless, officers at first selected for staff

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

positions, and also of the manner in which our outpost duty was mostly performed throughout the winter of 1854-5. It was not our rank and file who were the worst in this respect, for they had been well taught obedience, the first and most important duty of a soldier ; it was our officers of all degrees who were generally ignorant of their work, and the most striking examples of military ignorance were the great majority of those who had been selected to be our generals and our brigadiers and for the staff of the Army generally. A large proportion of these were taken from the Foot Guards, who had not then even the advantage of knowing what our Army was like outside of St. James' and Windsor. All were gallant daring fellows, who looked well after their men, and never spared themselves in any way in doing so. They were the very best material of which officers could possibly be made, and on active service always showed themselves most anxious to learn their duty, and never shrank from any amount of hard work. It was not their fault that they did not know their duty as officers when they embarked for Turkey ; it was the fault of the wretched system under which they lived nominally as soldiers, but never in barracks with their men, and having but little personal contact with them. All that is changed now. All corps in our Army were vastly improved by their service in the Crimea, but to none did it give such an entirely new life as to all ranks in the battalions which constituted the Brigade of Guards in that war.

## CHAPTER VI

### My First Day's Duty in the Trenches, 1854

**M**Y first tour of trench duty was by day, and I enjoyed it thoroughly. Full of fight and with a fair theoretical knowledge of "attack and defence," and of the besieger's art generally, the whole thing was delightful. I felt I had studied fortification to some useful purpose. My fellow subaltern was clever, a great reader, fond of the classics; he used at Eton to write Latin verses for his chums, of whom some were in our battalion. He was quite cool, but had no keenness for his profession. Although we were the only battalion in the right attack armed with Brown Bess, we were sent into what was then the most advanced trench and subsequently became our third parallel. Just in front of it was a spring of good water, round which we had thrown up a parapet to screen our men who went there to fill their calabashes. I was close to it all the day, and not more than about a couple of hundred yards off were some Russian rifle pits. From them came a bullet whenever a man showed himself above the parapet, and I amused myself putting a forage cap on a ramrod to see how near the bullet came to it. Then I made one of the men do it whilst I stood at a neighbouring loophole with a cocked musket laid upon the spot from which the last Russian shot had been

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

fired. As soon as I saw the puff of smoke from the hostile loophole I let drive at it. I carried on this little game for a long time with intense interest and amusement, until at last, bang came in a round shot followed by two or three shell. I flattered myself that I had stung the Russian bear, and that having killed or wounded some of the riflemen in front of me, they had thus opened fire upon us to keep us quiet. At this juncture, an officer arrived on the scene, having been sent by the field officer of the day from the Twenty-one gun Battery in rear to know "what all the firing was about?" When the facts were reported I received an order to "shut up" and not thus draw fire uselessly upon us. Afterwards throughout the siege, whenever I was idle during a day's tour of duty, I went into the advanced works and amused myself in the way I had done during my first day's experience of trench duty. I may not have killed a large number, not even one, but I at least made the enemy realize that we were keen and lighthearted and always ready to engage in such duels. It served to keep alive the same spirit amongst our men.

Throughout the whole siege, according to my views at the time, and as I still think, the one great desire on the part of the field officer of the day was if possible to keep things quiet during his twelve hours' duty in the trenches. This wish was certainly far too pronounced, and often too evident. In some respects it was doubtless a wise policy, for the Russians with a great arsenal behind them could at all times afford to fire three shells or round shot to our one. There was no stint of guns or ammunition in Sebastopol, judging from the piles of both we found in the place when it fell. But the case

## MY FIRST CRIMEAN WINTER

was very different with us. Not only had all our guns, powder, shot and shell to come by sea to Balaclava, but to be dragged up from there to our trenches some eight miles distant, and our Cabinet had not provided us with transport of any sort. It was therefore very necessary to economize even our musket ammunition. But there was a limit to that policy, and I think our field officers and our generals exceeded that limit. Any little show of timidity, no matter how insignificant in itself, damps the spirits of your own men and cannot fail to encourage the enemy.

During the month of December the weather was fine though cold. If we had been well fed we should have done well, but we never had enough to eat, and what we had was never appetizing. Before the beginning of the new year, when we might have shown some energy and vigour and thrown some amount of enterprise into our "attack," there was an entire absence of it, and we had already begun to act upon the defensive. The rôle of besieger and besieged was already reversed, and we tamely sat down under it. After Christmas no other policy was open to us, and if the Russians had thoroughly understood our real condition then, they might with ease have driven us from the right—the important attack—spiked our guns, blown up our trench magazines, and retired in safety by the Middle Ravine and Mamelon-Vert. If we lacked energy they lacked it all the more, and with much less excuse; for their men were not exposed in tents as we were, and had plenty of food and an abundance of firewood to cook it with.

I returned to camp that evening in every way satisfied with my first day in the trenches, which I can honestly

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say I thoroughly enjoyed. Indeed, I may add, every day that I subsequently spent in our siege works afforded me intense pleasure.

Christmas Day was at hand, and all were anxious to have, if possible, a plum pudding and something better than usual for dinner that day. My brother subaltern and I managed to buy at Balaclava a box of figs, a few pounds of very rancid suet or grease of some sort. No raisins or currants were to be had, nor could we obtain any flour. We thought that cut-up figs would suitably represent the plums, and that pounded-up biscuit would be a fair substitute for the flour. A Russian round shot and a large section of an exploded thirteen inch shell answered well as a pestle and mortar to pulverize the ship's biscuits. I was then and always have been the most feeble and useless of cooks. In the first place I hated cooking of all sorts, and to attempt it when there was any meat to be cut up or otherwise manipulated was repulsive to me. Even in the backwoods of Canada, I shrank from bleeding the deer I shot, and could neither "clean" fish nor cut up nor prepare any flesh for dinner. The sight of raw meat even to this day gives me nausea, and to pass a butcher's shop is always a trial. But to attempt to make a plum pudding was an amusement, and I was both greedy and hungry for a good "blow-out," to relieve the monotony of salt pork and, still worse, of red navy salt junk.

We two subalterns made a horrible looking mess of the materials I have described, and it was in no sense an appetizing looking dish. But after hours of work over it, the question of how a plum pudding was cooked occurred, and neither of us had any clear notions on the subject. We went as a deputation to our dear old Quarter-Master,

## MY CHRISTMAS PUDDING

a fine fellow in every respect. He had lately been our sergeant-major and commanded the respect of all ranks. He seemed to pity our foolish ignorance, and said it should be boiled, and boiled for several hours, describing how it should be tied up in a napkin before being put into the pot. I sacrificed one of my very few towels for the purpose, and we both felt much relieved when we saw the pot containing this unsavoury mess put upon the fire in charge of a servant, who was told to watch and tend it carefully. I dawdled about the camp, looking forward to a better dinner than usual and to a night in bed, for "G Company" was not for the trenches until the following morning. It was about 3 p.m. that an orderly sergeant arrived with the company order book, from which I learnt that we were unexpectedly required for the trenches that evening. What was to be done with the plum pudding? Our captain didn't care for it, although he swore as our men did in Flanders at his bad luck in having to be on duty all night. As we, his two subalterns, were at the moment both hungry, this question of the plum pudding was a serious matter: should we eat it in its half-boiled state or keep it for the following day? The ensign was for the latter, I in my greed and hunger voted for eating it at once, and I carried the day. We had to eat our dinner, plum pudding included, in a great hurry to be in time for the "fall in." It was hard to chew that pudding, and I only ate a little of it. Having marched down to the trenches, our company was told off for the Twenty-one gun Battery, which then mainly constituted the first parallel of the right attack. Our delightfully Irish assistant-surgeon, dear old Jackson, now Sir Robert Jackson, the cheeriest and best of comrades and least complaining of



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

men, was on duty with us. It was the first time I had had the luck to be told off for so safe, so comfortable a part of our siege works during any tour of trench duty, and I looked forward to a quiet night. We furnished no working parties, and we were quite safe, being covered by another parallel where the trench guard had to be on the alert all night. No firing was going on anywhere. It was fine but very cold, and with the exception of a few sentries here and there to keep a look-out, most of the men sat or lay about, and slept as best they could. It must have been about 10 p.m. when I began to feel uncomfortable, and very soon a pain set in that actually bent me double. I imagined I could feel, if not actually hear, each piece I had swallowed of that infernal pudding rattling in my stomach, as one might expect shot to rattle if one had swallowed a round of canister. The pain was intense; I was helpless and felt, as the Americans say, "real sick." I stood it for some time, my dear friend Doctor Jackson could do nothing for me; he said he could be of no use, for he had no brandy or physic of any sort to give me, and that I must go back to camp and get into bed. Go back I had to, and the doctor said he would go with me. He said he might be of use to me on the way to camp, and could be of none to any one in the trenches. So off we started, I being still in great pain. The night was cold and we walked very fast, both anxious to get under the blankets in our respective tents. About a quarter of an hour's sharp walking drove away my pain, and I suddenly found myself as well as ever I was. I stopped and said I would go back. My companion advised me as a doctor not to do so: as a soldier I replied I must go back. He then appealed to me as a friend to go to camp

## OUR ASSISTANT SURGEON

with him as he was of no use in the trenches. I said, "Oh! go home therefore by all means, but back to the trenches I must return." "How can I go back by myself?" he answered, "I have no sword nor pistol, and my only weapon of defence is my empty soda-water bottle. I dare not face those wild dogs on the road with it only." But I was obdurate, and he, in an extremely cross humour, had to follow me back to where I had so recently left my company. This best of comrades has since then been with me in many campaigns, and a braver man never lived. He was quite the sort of assistant surgeon one might read of in *Charles O'Malley*, full of fun and of Irish humour. In after years, when an old man, he married. I was then commanding the forces in Ireland, and he came to tell me his wife was going to have a baby. I said jokingly to him, "You ought to be tried by court-martial": he replied, "Bedad! I think I ought to be given the Victoria Cross!"

I had never before attempted to make a plum pudding—need I add, that I never tried again!

About this time my friend, Captain Barnston, was made Deputy-Assistant-Quarter-Master General at Army Head Quarters. It was a right good selection, for he had graduated at the Senior Department, and all round he was by far the best and ablest officer in our battalion. Unlike nearly all our other captains he was ambitious, and wished to rise in his profession. He had previously been asked to serve as an Assistant Engineer, but had wisely refused, for with his qualifications he was bound sooner or later to be selected for the staff of the Army. He advised me to apply for an appointment of assistant engineer which he had refused. I did so, and it was given to me. My

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brother officers were very angry, because in their eyes to leave the regiment was a crime. That was the common feeling then in most corps towards men who forsook regimental for staff work. They were looked upon as men who sought to exchange hard and dangerous trench duty for some safe and easy billet, with every night "in bed." I was extremely glad to obtain this opening, which in no degree removed me from trench work, and was bound to afford me opportunities for distinction and for coming to know those who ruled the army in the Crimea.

The engineers hated having to obtain assistants from the Line, but were obliged to do so because they had not enough officers to do their own work. Looking back at my service with the engineers, I feel that I owe no debt of gratitude to that corps. They regarded us as interlopers, and kept the rewards for trench service to themselves as much as possible.

## CHAPTER VII

### Service in the Trenches as Assistant Engineer

**I** JOINED the Engineer Camp the first week of January, 1855, and my first day's duty as an Engineer was the 4th of that month. The officer on duty with me was Lieutenant Pratt, R.E. It was a very cold day, with some rain, and a searching wind blew. I had a good overcoat, so kept fairly warm, but Pratt was very badly clad. I forget how it came about, but when on duty near the Danube before the army went to the Crimea he had lost all his kit, and had afterwards to pick up clothes as best he could. He was of a most uncomplaining disposition, and want and discomfort sat lightly upon him ; nor did he exert himself on his own behalf, as he might have done, in all such matters. He did not care how he fared as regarded food as long as he had a pipe to smoke and enough tobacco to put into it. Upon this occasion, his body was wrapped in a brown Turkish Grego that was tied round his waist by a cord or leathern strap, and whose hood protected his head well from the cold blast that came to us from the bleak Steppes beyond the Don. He had no gloves, but a pair of very coarse woollen socks supplied their place, and his feet were clad in the rough ammunition boot of the private soldier. He had all the contentment but none of the light-heartedness of Mr. Mark Tapley.

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The only work done during my twelve hours of duty was to clear the drains in the third parallel and to relay some of the gun platform sleepers in "Gordon's Battery." But, as a matter of fact, we did nothing in our trenches during the winter of 1854-5 beyond feeble efforts made to keep them free from water.

Amongst the Assistant Engineers at that time was Lieutenant, now General Sir Henry Green, of Jacob's Scind Horse, an excellent soldier of the first class, and a cheery comrade. He belonged to a fighting family and maintained its credit throughout the Crimean War. I am proud to have the privilege of counting him amongst my old soldier friends. He had been educated and taught his work by that most remarkable man, General Jacob, who amongst the many brilliant leaders the Indian army has given our Empire, was one of its ablest soldiers and one of its greatest administrators.

The Royal Engineer camp of the right attack was on the western side of the Careening Creek Ravine, just above the watering-place and near the windmill which stood to the east of it. Upon reporting myself there to the commanding Royal Engineer on the last day of 1854, I was ordered to share the tent occupied by Captain Vacher, of the Duke of Wellington's regiment, who was an assistant engineer and a graduate of the Senior Department. He was a demure old-maidish sort of man, who thought much of his health, but he was a thoroughly good-hearted fellow all the same, and upon further acquaintance I came to appreciate him as a friend. He was a most conscientious worker, and very methodical in all he did. He had joined the engineers before the Battle of Inkerman and had consequently been two months already doing duty as an

## MY TENT COMPANION

engineer, when I became his tent companion. He gave me much useful information as to the nature of our trench work and of the engineer officers I should have to deal with. In disposition he was my opposite, not caring for horses, nor for sport, nor for active games of any sort. His real place was in an office, and when subsequently serving in the quarter-master-general's office proved himself invaluable in keeping its records and correspondence in the best possible order. In fact, he preferred sedentary work to out-of-door employment.

Before I took up my abode in his tent, he had been for one or two nights with a party of sappers in the Tchernaya Valley, engaged, I think, in destroying the wooden bridge by which the Waronzoff road crossed the river near Sebastopol Harbour. He brought back from this expedition a Russian wooden wheelbarrow and some stout planks. The latter served to keep his bed off the ground, a great advantage in our very muddy camp, and the former was used, bit by bit, as firewood in the worst weather, when nothing else that was burnable could be found as fuel. It disappeared gradually, until only the iron axle and tyre of the wheel remained. Then came a dreadful day when we found ourselves with no fuel of any sort to cook our food with. We both looked wistfully at the above-mentioned four planks that formed his bed. I said nothing : there was a dead silence in the tent, at the door of which stood our two servants, who asked us what was to be done, whilst their eyes were fixed upon the planks. With a sigh, Vacher condemned one to the flames, and it supplied us all with the means of cooking for many days. Shortly afterwards the weather became still more horrible, our camps were ankle deep in mud and slush, and it

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

snowed and rained in turns all day and night. The world around wore an aspect of absolute wretchedness. Our men looked worn and hungry, and our poor dumb, half-starved ponies stood with their backs to the cold north wind, the very picture of silent misery. I was lying on the floor of our tent with great coat on, and every article of clothing I possessed either upon my body or under my head as a pillow, when my servant with a drawn hungry look upon his face appeared, and announced that he had burned the last splinter of the above-mentioned plank that morning to make our tea, and that no firewood of any sort was to be had anywhere. There were the three remaining planks, but their owner, Vacher, was in the trenches and they constituted his bedstead. What was to be done? He would require hot food of some sort when he returned from the trenches, but then, ought I without his permission to rob him of a plank, and so leave him with only two to sleep on? If not actually a point of law, it was at least a nice question. But I salved my conscience by the mental assurance that had they constituted my own bed I would certainly sacrifice one of them to the immediate and very pressing necessity of the moment. I said therefore to my servant, "Take one," as I pointed to Vacher's bed. I confess that my conscience pricked me as I did so, and I felt as if I had committed a serious crime. My chum returned late and in a very hungry condition from the trenches. It had snowed all the day during his tour of duty, and had continued to do so all the way back to camp. He looked somewhat disconsolate and much down on his luck. As he charged into dry clothes, I saw he had become conscious that he must sleep that night upon two planks only, but he said

## ASSISTANT ENGINEERS

nothing, and I lacked the courage to tell him what I had done. I ought to add in self-justification that I had no bedstead or planks to sleep on myself, or I should have burnt them before I burnt my chum's. I slept on a waterproof sheet with a place hollowed out for my hip beneath it. But, thank Heaven. I have always had the inestimable faculty of sleeping at all hours of the day or night, and under even the most sleep-killing circumstances. We had little conversation that evening, and I re-read my last home letters and scraps of some old newspapers in the dim light of a very bad candle. I could have it in any position near where I lay, for my candlestick was a Russian bayonet picked up on the battlefield of Inkerman. It required no table, for I stuck it in the damp floor of the tent wherever I found the light shone best. That night, I fully realized the truth of Sancho Panza's saying, that "sleep covers you up like a cloak."

Captain Vacher was soon selected for the quarter-master-general's staff, and left me for Army Head Quarters. I cannot say with "bag and baggage," but I may truthfully say with all his baggage in one bag.

My second chum in the engineer camp was a lieutenant of the 64th Regiment, a most genial Irishman named Sheehy. He spoke with a Cork brogue and was a fine specimen of the brave race to which he belonged. He was an ugly-looking fellow without a moustache, with prominent eyes whose pupils were very small; but he was blessed with a laughing face and a comical expression, and the lightest of cheerful, honest hearts. The best of friends, of fellows and of comrades, indifferent to danger of all sorts, and a good rider, he was an amusing contrast morally and physically to my staid companion whose place



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

he took in the tent. His regiment was in India, but he had come to the Crimea on the chance of finding something to do, he did not care what, as long as he could see some fighting. The day after he landed he walked to the trenches, where he soon lost his way. He wore an oil-skin cover over his forage cap, so that without asking him who he was, or examining the buttons of his shell jacket, one could not discover the regiment he belonged to. As soon as he asked an officer to point out the road to camp he attracted attention, and aroused mistrust. We had recently grown suspicious of strangers, so he was asked his name and regiment. His name was not, I believe, uncommon in certain parts of Ireland, but when he said he belonged to the 64th Regiment, which did not form part of the Crimean army, misgivings on the part of all present fell upon him at once. General Codrington was in the trenches at the time, to whom the matter was referred. The most polite and charming of polished gentlemen he listened to Sheehy's story, and then, with many apologies, said he must ask that he should accompany him to camp. Sheehy strode away on his long legs beside the general's well known grey pony, and they had a pleasant talk. I think Sheehy had done one term with the Senior Department, and was thus able to converse easily on military subjects. He was fortunately able to find a man in camp who had been there with him. In a few days he was appointed an assistant engineer in the right attack, and though he knew nothing about the work he was useful under those who did. He was told off to share my tent, and we soon became great friends, for no more genial comrade could be found. Peace be to the ashes of this loyal Irish Catholic, the firmest of friends, the most

## TRENCH DUTY AS AN ENGINEER

daring and enthusiastic of soldiers. He died of fever on the road to Cawnpore early in the Great Mutiny, having joined some irregular cavalry corps in the hope of getting to the front. When in Oudh, I received a letter of an old date from him some considerable time after I had heard of his death. In it he advised me to join the regiment he was serving with, as he said, "it was sure to have plenty of fighting." Would that every man who then held the Queen's commission was as enthusiastic a soldier, as indifferent to danger and as careless of his own life as that gallant soul was.

As a rule the engineer officer's ordinary tour of duty meant a day or a night mostly spent in that part of the trenches which was nearest to the enemy. During the winter months we made no progress with our siege works at all, and were only too glad to keep our batteries and parallels tolerably clear of snow, mud and water. But the fact that we spent our day or night on duty as close as possible to the Russian works made our employment more dangerous than if we were doing duty with a regiment, the infantry trench guard being distributed throughout the works generally, including many spots where one ran little or no risk from shot or shell. The artillery remained in their batteries which, being at that time exclusively in the first parallel, were always safe from sorties, being well protected by the infantry guard of the second parallel. During the night there could be no artillery fire upon them, and as the artillery neither made their batteries nor kept them in repair, their nights during the winter were spent in safety, and when possible in sleep. Of course the same remark applies also to the naval brigade who worked the guns in some of the batteries of our first

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

parallel. The serious time for the gunner, whether of the Royal Artillery or Royal Navy, was during the "bombardments," when both always lost heavily. At other times they had an easy life of it throughout the siege, much easier than the infantry, and still more so than the engineers, as all our *boyaux*, batteries and other works were made between sunset and sunrise the following morning. The night was the dangerous time for sorties, but none ever penetrated as far as our first parallel. During the winter there was but very little firing from either side. We were all too busy in trying to keep our works and trenches fairly drained, no easy matter in the snow and rain of that season.

I recall many events of my eight months' constant trench work with much pleasure. I was on duty the day Lord Raglan brought General de la Marmora to visit our right attack, through which I guided them. The Sardinian general had a charmingly genial manner, and from the questions he asked me, I soon discovered he had a good knowledge of fortification, and understood the besieger's art well. So very few of our generals then knew anything of such matters, and indeed of anything belonging to their profession beyond barrack-yard drill, that it was a rare, a pleasant event to meet with an educated commander like La Marmora. He spoke English, and struck me as being all that one expects a well-born English gentleman to be. Like Lord Raglan, he had much of the refined and stately manner of the old school about him, and with all that courtesy of deportment so rarely met with in these days of undue familiarity and of slipshod address. In fact, he was a sort of Italian replica of our own commander, and both men looked soldiers all over.

There was nothing but desultory firing going on whilst

## A NIGHT ADVENTURE

they were in the trenches, but one gun-shell struck the parapet of the third parallel in front of and very near us, and hopping over it, burst as it did so. I watched the faces of both closely at the moment, but neither was in the least degree disturbed by it.

In camp upon the evening of June 16, Major Campbell, of the Cornwall Light Infantry, then the 46th Regiment, Captain De Moleyns, R.E., and myself were discussing the prospects of the assault which we knew to be imminent. The width, and especially the depth, of the Redan ditch was a prominent point in our conversation, and we dwelt upon the fact that we knew little about the ground immediately in front of that work. We freely condemned our want of enterprise in such matters and the little encouragement that was given all ranks to undertake any examination of it. I don't remember by which of us the suggestion was made, but we three there and then decided to try our luck, and by crawling out on hands and knees to the abattis, and if possible through it to the edge of the ditch, to ascertain its dimensions. We provided ourselves each with a long string to plumb the depth of the ditch should any of us succeed in reaching it. We told no one in camp of our intentions, but about midnight were at our places in the most advanced parallel. I was in the centre and my companions one on each side at some fifty or more yards to my right and left. We took off our swords but each carried his revolver in hand, having agreed not to fire except in self-defence. We crawled quietly over the trench parapet, exposing ourselves as little as possible, having told the officers commanding companies in the vicinity of our intention, so that we might not be fired

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

upon by our own men. I soon lost sight of my fellow adventurers as I crawled along very slowly, and with the least possible noise. The night was by no means dark, though no moon was visible, but at times I held my breath as I peered around into the dark and listened for any sound, such even as the disturbance of a loose stone would give, but there was none. No voices were to be heard in front, and no Russian sentry to be seen upon the sky-line. "Where are their sentries?" I kept thinking. "Lying down," I assumed; but had they seen us? Were they watching, and perhaps inwardly chuckling at our folly and waiting like the spider in his corner to pounce suddenly upon us when well within their net? Forward I crept very slowly, bit by bit over the rocky ground well scored all over by our guns, and deeply pitted with shell holes, but covered here and there with reedy grass. The abattis was at last close in front, and I could see its weird branches at places against the sky-line. My pulse went quicker than usual: I imagined I could hear my heart beat, and at such moments lay prone to steady myself. I wanted three eyes, one to peer into the dark unknown in my immediate front, the others to watch to right and left where I knew my fellow travellers were engaged as I was.

At last, I heard a noise to one side of where I was slowly crawling forward, scanning the ground as I went with the utmost intentness. I saw upon the sky-line to one side of me a man suddenly stand up and run at full speed for our trenches. There was no sound of any voice, no noise but what he made in running, no other indication of any enemy being near, and no shot was fired. I knew it was one of my friends, and being quite sure that neither would bolt thus, except to escape capture, I felt certain he had

## RUSSIAN SENTRIES WIDE AWAKE

come upon some Russian group of outlying sentries. After a little halt, and seeing no other figure in any direction round me, I resumed my forward and very slow progress. As I recall the events of this unimportant and as it proved unsuccessful adventure, which could only have covered a small section of an hour, every minute it took from start to finish comes before me as if it had been an operation of some consequence, and had extended over some hours. To hurry the pace would have been to discover ourselves to the enemy, so I resumed my crawling, wriggling and very slow advance. Before long, I saw my remaining comrade run back also; I cannot say that after that I retained much hope of ever reaching the Redan counter-scarp, but I thought if possible I might get near it and so learn something of what the ground immediately in its front was like. "Nothing venture, nothing win," I thought, so after a sufficient pause I pushed forward again at a very slow and still more cautious pace. I began to think I was doing well, there being nothing to indicate the presence of any one in my immediate neighbourhood, when in the twinkling of an eye, up there popped upon the sky-line some two or three heads in front of me, and as far as I could judge not more than about ten paces off. My reader, what would you have done in such a position? I ran for my life in the most undignified fashion, and was soon safe, though breathless, in our advanced parallel. The only useful result of our unsuccessful venture was the assurance we gained that the Russians kept good watch and ward over the ground in their immediate front. All three rode back to camp in bad humour, disappointed in our hearts, and told no one what we had been about that midnight.

## CHAPTER VIII

### On Duty in the Trenches as an Engineer Officer, 1855

I HAVE often been asked what one did when a shell fell unpleasantly close. The safest thing to do is to fall flat until it bursts. This one always made "the travelling gentleman," and even the visitor from the cavalry camp do, when taking him round our siege works. It was a cruel amusement, for the terror of death generally possessed their souls until the infernal shell had burst. But we had extremely little to amuse us, and were often much bored by these sightseers. I have seen this little game played off upon a visitor even when no shell had fallen anywhere near, for the mere devilment-sake of seeing the effect it would have upon him. But the officers who were most accustomed to shell fire, such as the Engineers in the right attack, seldom took much trouble about their own bodies. Unless the offending shell had fallen disagreeably close, one stood and faced it, being well able to see and to dodge the great pieces into which it invariably burst. (I never picked up nor saw a very small splinter of any large mortar shell.) This, however, required the quickness of a practised eye. But, writing from my own experience of those with whom I was closely associated during the siege, we at last became too indifferent to all species of fire to take any

## ON DUTY IN THE TRENCHES

great special precautions against it. Perhaps it arose from a sort of callous laziness. As regards my own feelings, I don't think I ever expected to live through the siege after I had fully realized what were my duties as an Engineer officer in the right attack. When, as an Infantry officer, it was your day or night for duty in the trenches, it was quite a chance where you were sent to in them. Many parts of our siege works were safe when compared with others. I am sure, however, that when the captain of a company wished for a safe billet during his tour of duty, it was for the sake of his men and not in the interests of his own vile body. We all had an intense horror of losing our comrades in the ranks, the why and the wherefore it is not difficult to analyze, for every right-minded officer was deeply attached to them. But to look after his sappers was not the first consideration with the engineer officer: it was to push the siege forward, and consequently one never had a safe billet whilst on engineer duty in the trenches of our right attack. In nine out of every ten hours of duty, the engineer was in the post of greatest danger—the head of the sap or somewhere in the most advanced batteries was where his duties usually required him to be. During the bombardments he had general charge of some line of batteries, and he was responsible for keeping the embrasures in serviceable order. This was no child's play during daylight in any of our bombardments, for the moment a man appeared in an embrasure to repair it, the enemy's batteries bearing upon the battery at once concentrated their fire upon that embrasure.

There was one officer amongst us, Lieutenant Murray, afterwards killed, who was remarkable for his imperturbable coolness. Helping him upon one occasion during a bom-



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

bardment in repairing the cheek of an embrasure which the enemy's fire had just destroyed, another round shot entered the other cheek, and so covered him with its débris. The only notice he took of the occurrence was to shake the dust from the tails of his frock coat, whilst he went on with his work without a pause, as if the event was one of hourly occurrence and of no consequence. I never saw or heard of an engineer officer asking a private to undertake any service of danger in which he did not himself take more than his fair share. In connexion with the repair of our batteries whilst a bombardment was in full swing, I was one day at work mending an embrasure with some one else, I forget whom. I was in the act of raising the sandbag revetment over the gabions in an embrasure with a handspike as a lever in order to enable my friend to insert a filled sandbag, when a round shot tore through that cheek of the embrasure. In a second I found myself sprawling on the gun-platform within the embrasure, whilst the handspike I had been using, sent flying, with considerable impetus, struck a man's leg, bowing him over also and hurting him seriously.

The engineer officers who were recent arrivals from England often entered the trenches for the first time with very high and mighty notions regarding their superior knowledge as to how the engineer work should be done. I was one evening detailed for duty with a captain of that corps just from Chatham. We were to mark out the emplacement for a new battery, and he was anxious to begin before the darkness of night had shrouded us from view. I persuaded him to wait. He did so for some time, but at last, impatient to be at work, he would brook no longer delay, and, scoffing at all danger from hostile riflemen,

## BATTERY BUILT OF SANDBAGS

and against my advice, he insisted upon beginning. We had not proceeded more than a few paces from the friendly cover of a parallel, when a volley of rifle bullets was poured amongst us from some neighbouring rifle pits. One bullet went through the stiff top of my light infantry forage cap, and another through my short loose coat from one side to the other, uncomfortably near my backbone. My energetic but obstinate R.E. captain—as indeed we all did—bustled rapidly back in a very undignified fashion to the shelter of the trench we had just foolishly left. Not long afterwards he was badly wounded, and I think lost a leg.

I often saw horrible wounds inflicted, when men were literally torn in pieces by shot and shell. I think it was during the second or third bombardment that I was one day in charge of No. 14 battery of six or eight guns, in our second parallel, which I had taken part in building not long before. It was, I think, the only battery that had been constructed in one night during the siege. This achievement was accomplished by preparing in the neighbouring boyaux during many days and nights before the enormous amount of filled sandbags it would take to complete a battery of the size required. With these filled sandbags the battery was, I may say, entirely built during one night, and when day broke, great must have been the astonishment of the Russians at its sudden mushroom growth. In the next bombardment it received special attention from the enemy's guns, until at last some two or three merlons—that part of the parapet between every two guns—were razed level with the soles of the embrasures. The enemy thereupon turned more guns upon that part of it, as the gunners there were fully exposed from the hips upwards. In the space of a few minutes one of their shot

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

cut a gunner in two, without, I suppose, hitting the spinal cord. The result was that the arms of the trunk kept moving about as if the poor fellow was in the most terrible agony. It was a ghastly, an uncanny sight. The artillery captain in command, a real good man, dazed, like myself, by the horror of the spectacle, said excitedly, "What shall I do? Shall I put him out of pain?" But before a doctor could be found the poor fellow had ceased to move. I shudder as I now, in cold blood, think of that awful occurrence; but the doctor, when he arrived, said that although he was able to fling his arms wildly about for what seemed to those standing by as a horribly long time, the helpless sufferer must already have lost all power of feeling.

I must not quit the subject of this quickly built sandbag battery without mentioning that when the mode of its construction became known at the headquarters of the Royal Engineers in the Crimea, an angry "minute" was communicated to those responsible for it. Attention was called to the fact that sandbags were scarce and valuable—I believe the Black Sea fleet was then supplying them in large quantities—and that we had expended upon this one battery alone more of them than had been used in Lord Wellington's siege of Burgos! Few of us cared how much they cost the country, for we knew how far their use upon the occasion complained of had gone towards the saving of life. We all felt sure that had the Duke of Wellington been alive then, he would have been the first to approve of the plan adopted for building the battery in question. But Red Tape is a terrible disease.

Our sailors who served the guns in the Twenty-one Gun Battery—commonly known as "Gordon's Battery"—were

## THE NAVAL BRIGADE

wont to describe in very matter-of-fact words the most horrible events of a "*hot day*" there. A comrade of mine, an assistant engineer, told me as follows. He was in that battery during one of our bombardments when the blue-jacket relief arrived, and overheard one sailor ask another where his messmate "Bill" was. The answer, given in the deep conventional "lower-deck" voice, was: "Bill? Why, there's his bloody pipe and there's his bloody liver." Poor Bill had been knocked to pieces by a shell during the day.

What splendid gunners they were! always cheery and always ready to lend a hand in any job, and that "hand" was sure to mean effective help. Their leader, Captain Sir William Peel, was in many ways one of the most remarkable men I ever served with. We often met on duty in the twenty-one gun battery, almost all the guns in which were served by the Navy. One day, in fairly quiet times, I was walking in it with him up and down in true quarter-deck fashion, when we both heard the peculiar "pitch-ata-wich-ata" noise in the air which bespoke the near approach of a large mortar-shell. We stopped to watch it, and to our horror saw it fall immediately in front of us upon the entrance to one of our largest powder magazines, and not five paces off; the shell burst as it did so. Strange as it may seem, I well remember how amused I was at the moment by the sudden harlequin head-over-heels fashion in which the magazine-man came rolling out into the battery from the smoking ruins. The sandbags and apparently the passage timbers had been set on fire, and in an instant a volume of smoke, laden with dust from the explosion issued from the interior. It was an appalling moment, and it must have seemed the end of this world to any of us

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

who still retained the power to reason at all. We were not actually dead, but horror had for the second of time, as it were, killed our thinking faculties. We were face to face with death, immediate death. I have often rubbed shoulders with that mocking monster, but I may without boasting say that upon no other occasion which I can remember has he ever "cow'd my better part of man." But Peel was "all there," for in much less time than it takes me to tell this story, I saw him dive into the smoking magazine. This action on his part made men of us all in an instant, and it was not long before every spark of fire there had been well trampled out. I do not know, I cannot tell from experience, whether courage or cowardice is the more quickly contagious. But this I do know, that of all horrible sights, that of a man in action who exhibits a want of nerve and daring is the worst. Thank heaven, it is a disease from the effects of which the British gentleman does not require any sort of inoculation to preserve him.

One evening about the middle of March, 1855, I started from the Royal Engineer camp for night duty in the trenches. I rode as far as the Middle Ravine picket, and walked up the trench leading from it to the right of "Gordon's" or "the twenty-one gun battery." There I met Captain Craigie, R.E., awaiting my arrival to relieve him, as he had been in the trenches throughout the day, and I was to relieve him and be on duty until the following morning. He told me what he had been working at, and we had a conversation upon the work to be done during the night. We bade one another good-evening, and he started for camp, down hill towards our picket in the ravine. The Russians at the moment were busy shelling Gordon's battery, from very large mortars, and I stood there for some time watching

## A FATAL SHELL

their practice. One that burst high in the air attracted my attention, and with those about me I laughed at the badness of the enemy's fuzes. In a few minutes a sapper non-commissioned officer came running up the hill to where I was standing. Out of breath when he reached me, he jerked out the words that Captain Craigie had just been killed. Upon reaching the picket he had halted to light his pipe, and was in the act of doing so from the pipe of another man, when a great piece of the mortar shell at whose premature bursting I had just been laughing struck and killed him on the instant. What a curious chance ! for we were accustomed to regard that outpost as quite safe from all fire. The soldier from whose pipe he was taking a light, and whose face was close to his, escaped unhurt. Such is siege work ; death often comes to men in what are regarded as the safest corners.

It is no easy matter to describe General Gordon, then Captain J. W. Gordon, after whom was named the Twenty-one Gun Battery in the first parallel of the right attack, of which he was the commanding engineer, and immediately under whom I served through the siege. He was a silent man, and I don't think it could be said that he was ever very intimate with any one in the Crimea. I subsequently made a long voyage with him to Nova Scotia, and during its progress he kept to himself very much ; always civil and cordial in his greetings he preferred to walk the deck by himself. It was the same in the Crimea, and he struck me as one bowed down with the weight of a sorrow he would mention to none. A deeply religious man in whom danger apparently excited neither pleasure nor repugnance, he seemed only to distinguish between a safe position or an extremely perilous one as he would notice any slight

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

change in the weather of a fine sunny day. Uninfluenced himself by his surroundings, he was nevertheless well aware of how much the example shown by a man in his position affected those around him. He knew how infectious courage was, and how much any exhibition of contempt for personal danger braced the nerves and steadied the heads of those less gifted with masculine daring than he was. He was a man in a hundred. During a lull in our siege operations, one sailor was overheard saying to another in a battery, "I haven't seen old Gordon here lately." "No," answered his shipmate, "the fire ain't hot enough for that old beggar just now."

In how many different forms do both courage and weakness of heart show themselves in time of danger. Many a brave man is for the moment dazed by the horror of what seems inevitable destruction in the next instant of time. But give him even one minute, and he will so pull himself together as to act with well directed bravery. I could write a long theme upon the effect of great and unexpected danger upon even brave and determined men. The good that is within us varies much in quality as well as quantity, and is called into play with a force which depends much upon the natural disposition and attributes of each man. Each of us is affected differently in manner and in measure by external circumstances. And so it is with our nerves and the control we all strive to exercise over their vagaries.

On the night of March 22, 1855, the enemy made a determined sortie upon what was eventually our third parallel. They drove off our trench guard from the greater part of it, and an Albanian who was with the sortie was bayoneted as he fired his pistol into a magazine of small arms ammunition. Major John Gordon, as he then was, had neither

## MAJOR JOHN GORDON

pistol nor sword with him, but standing behind a neighbouring traverse, defended the passage round it by stones hurled at any Russian who tried to pass that way. In the act of doing so, whilst his arm was drawn back to throw a stone, a musket bullet went through the upper and also the lower part of his arm. It was he who subsequently exercised so great an influence over Charley Gordon, commonly known as Chinese Gordon, but there was no blood relationship between them. I often heard the following pretty legend about him; I cannot pledge myself for its truth, but I can say with all confidence that the main outlines of the story accord exactly with my estimate of his character. He, being an eldest son, had inherited a property that made him independent. He fell in love, and upon proposing for the lady, learnt from her that she was in love with his younger brother. He forthwith made over his possessions to that brother so that he might marry and make her happy.

We heard of the Czar Nicholas' death early in March, 1855, and Lord Raglan sent the news under a flag of truce to the Governor of Sebastopol, but he refused to believe it. A few days later we had a short cessation of hostilities to bury the dead lately killed during a sortie. In a conversation with the Russian officer commanding the sentries placed on the enemy's side to mark the limit beyond which we might not pass, one of our officers referred to this event, but the Russian would not have it, declaring it was impossible, for God would not, he said, thus afflict Holy Russia in the midst of so great a war.

I have often been asked my opinion as to the capabilities of the Royal Engineer officers with whom I served before Sebastopol. I only knew well those of the right attack, and regarding them I give my opinion here for what it is



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

worth as an outsider who had the privilege of serving with them in the greatest and most remarkable siege the corps had ever been engaged in. Whilst the same regimental spirit influences them now as in 1854-5, I think they are infinitely better and more practically educated than they were in the Sebastopol epoch. We had several stupid men amongst those who served in the Crimea, who could not, I think, have passed the examinations now required for entrance into that corps. Their practical and general education is now much better than it was in the middle of the last century. There were a few, a very few, idle fellows amongst them, as there always must be in all professions. But taking them all round, it would, I am certain, be impossible to find any body of officers more devoted to their duties or more indifferent to the serious dangers those siege duties entailed. We assistant engineers who had not been educated at Woolwich or trained at Chatham were wont to smile at their airs of assumed mental superiority over the officers of all other branches. Few of them knew much of the world, and most of them had been so long employed in the repair of barracks at home and abroad, that their military education whilst in the Army had not amounted to much. Indeed, I always regarded most of them as men who had been rendered small minded by their training and through their little knowledge of the world, and who were not well educated outside their own duties. They were in, but not of, the Army; they wore its uniform, but, until the Siege of Sebastopol, few of them had ever done a soldier's duty. I did not know one of any eminent ability or of the great breadth of mind and general capacity which distinguished that eminent soldier, that sagacious adviser, General Sir John Burgoyne. In

## ROYAL ENGINEER OFFICERS

fact, I don't think they were by any means as clever as they thought they were. All of them had, however, received what was then a good practical training at the Chatham School of Military Engineering. None of them had had any previous war experience of any kind, and were too bound down by the historical precedents they had been taught at Woolwich Academy. In all difficulties, I may say upon every occasion, each of them apparently said to himself, "Our officers did so-and-so at such-and-such a siege in the Peninsula War," and he shaped his course accordingly. None seemed to think it was desirable to reason out each particular problem as it arose according to the commonsense exigencies of the moment: they ransacked their brains for precedents instead. I believe all would have done better had they never read *Jones' Sieges in Spain*, and had not that book been revered as the sapper's "Book of the Law." But if our engineers were old-fashioned, so were our generals. No new light, no useful gleam of imagination or originality, ever illuminated whatever may have been their reasoning powers. Never was any great siege more stupidly planned throughout. We floundered along upon archaic principles, without even a Pallas to inspire us with originality enough to invent a wooden horse on modern principles that might open for us a passage into the city.

During the siege one or two engineer officers were taken prisoners. A curious circumstance is connected with one of them, Lieutenant James, who was captured the first week of July, 1855. He sent a letter to camp under a flag of truce, asking that his clothes, etc., etc., might be sent to him. All communications under flags of truce, I should mention, were made at sea by the war ships of the besiegers

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

and the besieged. In the little note which thus reached us from him there was a line scored out with ink marks, which of course gave rise to much speculation upon our part. A sharp fellow amongst us suggested that if we painted the obliterated line with lime-juice, the last made ink strokes would come out first, and we should be thus able, for a few minutes at least, to see what Lieutenant James had originally written. This was done with great success, and we read the erased words, which were as follows: "I was taken to see General Todleben" (the great Russian engineer who immortalized himself by his splendid defence of the place); "he was in bed, having been recently wounded in the leg." This was the first intimation we received of this fact, and showed us how anxious the enemy were to keep it from us. I wish we had had a Todleben to direct our siege operations, even though it had been necessary to convey him in a Sedan chair through our batteries and parallels daily!

In the winter of 1854-5 I made frequent visits to Balaclava to purchase food during that first never-to-be-forgotten period of misery. How curious, how melancholy, was much of what I saw upon that dreary track of mud we called a road. How grotesque were many of the figures I often passed upon it, how sad were others! Here and there a British soldier staggering under the incumbrance of much warm clothing that must have been designed for a giant, whilst by far the greater number of our men were in sorry, worn-out old great coats that afforded them very little warmth. All had a care-worn look that bespoke overwork, insufficient food, and incipient disease. Who that saw it can ever forget the appearance of our men upon fatigue duty whom one met there daily. My heart was often

## THE ROAD TO BALACLAVA

torn as I saw the starved mules and horses similarly employed, their drivers striving to keep them on their feet as they crossed the deep mud holes that abounded everywhere. In the midst of unavoidable misery, as also when struggling with danger, what an uncomplaining fellow is the British soldier! He was always energetic; either cursing his mule that had fallen from want of strength to drag itself through the Kadakoi quagmire, or laughing at his comrade who had stumbled into some deep rut. What saddened one most upon that road were the long strings of sick and wounded being conveyed from camp to the hospital ships in the harbour. Few men now remain to tell the story of that first, that unlucky winter. Many of its incidents have faded from my memory, but were I to live for ever I should never forget the manly, uncomplaining resignation of our soldiers throughout its appalling miseries.

The poor Turkish private was a still more melancholy figure in that "slough of despond." Starvation and want had reduced him to little more than a skeleton hidden away under the hood of his reddish-brown coloured grégo. No one apparently took any interest in his health, comfort, or welfare. He looked the picture of resignation, accepting the position not only as his fate, the decree of Allah, but as if there was nothing in it to occasion surprise.

On that road one met all sorts and conditions of men, and the French army was always fairly represented there. First and foremost came that best of all *corps d'élite*, the Zouaves, daredevil fellows who in so many of their characteristics resembled our own soldiers. Infinitely superior in physique and spirit to the ordinary French conscript, they fraternized with their red-coated allies and did not conceal their contempt for the "Johnny Crapauds" of their

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

own Line regiments. As I bent my way to our little port in search of provisions, I often met parties of the picturesque Chasseurs d'Afrique on their grey barbs, and also the brown-skinned, fighting Algerian sepoys of Louis Napoleon. How the little vagabond Greek shopkeeper from Stamboul and the Jew from Alexandria used to fleece us at Balaclava! Many of them became very rich. As a rule I treated myself to a pint of so-called champagne upon these visits, paying half a sovereign for this refreshing and fizzing foreign beverage—whatever it consisted of. The one great shopkeeper of Balaclava must have made a large fortune at that time from the British officer.

As the winter wore on, our army grew daily smaller, and the men who remained seemed to have lost their usual light-heartedness. The fun and chaff our men generally delight in was then seldom to be heard from their lips. A saddened look that betokened low spirits, the result of privation and of over-work, had settled upon too many faces. What killed our men most was the want of firewood. At first the high bush that covered the field of Inkerman supplied them with ample material for cooking. Up to about the beginning of February our fatigue parties dug up the roots of this bush, and, when dried a little, it partially supplied our wants. Our billhooks and pickaxes were, however, made of such miserable metal that they were poor implements for such work. Why do we always supply our army with tools of a very inferior quality? If the soldiers who have to use them were allowed to buy them also, we should have as good axes and shovels as other armies. The consequence of our lack of firewood was, that we all soon began to eat our salt pork and red navy-junk in a partially uncooked state, and this brought on diarrhoea,

## OUR ILL-FED RANK AND FILE

which too frequently ended in dysentery, that scourge from which nearly all of us suffered and which killed so many.

But I never felt any sort of pity for myself or for any officer in the army. We could always afford to buy food. A trip to Balaclava meant, as I have mentioned, a pint of fizzing liquid and plenty to eat. A box of sardines kept one alive for a day. But how different it was with our men ! They had no half-sovereign to pay for food ; they had no change of clothes when they returned to camp from the trenches ; they had no beds to lie on at night, not even when grievously ill. Poor gallant fellows, how nobly, how uncomplainingly they died !

In the Government that sent our men to the Crimea there was no soldier : all its members were political gentlemen. I trust that in the next world they may be the slaves of the noble spirits who died of want before Sebastopol through their ignorance of war, of its wants, and of its stupendous difficulties.

During one of my very first visits to Balaclava, as I neared that little port I was stopped by a well dressed merchant seaman, who wanted to know if he were on the right road for our camps. I said " Yes," and we had a little conversation, as I endeavoured to explain how he could best find his way there. I said, " Those are a good pair of long boots you have on. Will you sell them ? " His answer was, " Yes, I gave thirty shillings for them as I was leaving Liverpool, and you may have them for three pounds." I asked the same question about the new and very good warm-looking pea-jacket he wore. He was quite willing to take four pounds for it, having paid half that sum for it. I said, " Take it off, and the boots too." He did so, and I handed him over seven pounds. I wish that all the money

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I ever possessed had been as well, as usefully expended. He did not see Sebastopol that day!

In the spring I sketched and carefully examined the ground where our troops had stood and fought on that Guy Fawkes' Day at Inkerman. I fully realized how nearly we had been destroyed, and admired more than ever the splendid fighting qualities of our regimental officers and of the rank and file they commanded. Indeed, my oft repeated study of this battle on the heights where it was fought, made me feel prouder than ever of our race, though fully convinced that our affairs were so abominably mismanaged upon the occasion that the Russians ought to have utterly destroyed us. All who that day saw our men fight were loud in praise of their regimental spirit and of the devotion of our officers to their men. It was indeed a soldier's battle, and who can praise their valour enough! What Napier wrote of it as displayed at Albuera is equally applicable to the way in which all ranks stood at Inkerman. The noblest traits and virtues of the British soldier and of our regimental officers came out there all the stronger because of the painful contrast between such qualities and the helpless, feckless ignorance of war displayed by many of our generals and their inept staff upon that occasion. His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge was in the midst of the hardest fighting in and around the two-gun battery, and I have heard men say it was difficult to understand how he escaped being shot, for he stuck to his post to the last, encouraging by his example all around him.

But the Battle of Inkerman could never have taken place had any ordinary care and intelligence been shown by those who selected the positions for our outposts, whose

## THE FIELD OF INKERMAN

purpose it was to watch the enemy's movements, to ferret out his intentions, and so to protect us from surprise. It was a disgrace to all the staff concerned that we were caught napping by an enemy whom we allowed to assemble close to us during the previous night without our knowledge. Had any general who knew his business—Sir Colin Campbell, for instance—been in command of the division upon our extreme right that Gunpowder-Plot Day of 1854, we should not have been caught unawares. No trouble was taken even to send patrols into the valley of the Tchernaya, where a main road crossed the river by a bridge near its mouth. We sat down quietly on the top of heights and slopes, making no effort to ascertain what the enemy were about a mile off at the bottom of them. In all the history of modern war, I do not know of another instance of such culpable neglect on the part of divisional commanders of all the well-known and long established precautions that should be taken by troops in the field against surprise. We knew the enemy were near us, and but eleven days before, that enemy had made a serious attack from the Tchernaya valley, only a few miles above Inkerman, upon our short line of communication with Balaclava. The fighting characteristics of our soldiers and regimental officers were so conspicuous throughout the Battle of Inkerman that we have been content to forget the culpable professional ignorance of those who had been selected to command them. May God defend us in future against any similar reckless selection.

Upon the evening of that day, we were told, two generals of division urged the immediate re-embarkation of the army, a disgrace from which we were saved by that cool determination which, even under the most adverse circumstances,



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never forsook Lord Raglan for a moment. His was courage of the highest order.

For months afterwards, the events of that battle were topics of daily conversation in camp, and those who had seen most of it, and who knew most about it, could not peak too highly of our regimental officers and of the men they led, or condemn too emphatically the inefficiency of our leaders. Of course, there were exceptions, for there were a few right good men amongst our generals—dear old Sir George Brown, who commanded the light division, for example, in every sense a fine soldier of the old school. He was the coolest of men, and under fire was an object lesson to all who saw him. He stuck to “pipeclay” to the last. A friend of mine had found him shaving before daybreak the morning of Alma, and without doubt he was the only man who used a razor upon that occasion. No matter how hot the day, he was never seen without his leather stock; indeed, it was generally believed that he slept in it. A braver man of the Peninsula school never wore the Queen’s uniform.

There was also General Pennyfather, the daring Irishman famous for his swearing propensities, his reckless courage, and his splendid behaviour at Meanee.

Of the brigadiers some were very good men. There was first, above all the others, Sir Colin Campbell, of great war experience, an able leader, and a first-rate soldier, who was trusted by his men and by all who knew him; there was also General Codrington, a keen, active soldier, and though without much experience, he was already learning quickly. If either of these, or Sir Richard Airey, had been in command at Inkerman, we should not have been surprised as we were on November 5. But the active, keen, and edu-

## SIR RICHARD AIREY

cated soldier to whom I soon found all the best men in our Crimean army who knew him well looked up to as a future leader, was Sir Richard Airey, the last of the three generals I have named. He was the one great redeeming feature at Army Headquarters. Cool, with perfect manners, a beautiful horseman and keen sportsman, he was also a highly educated soldier who had studied the science and the art of war in all its phases. No man knew our army better in every sense. If the war-ignorant Government which then ruled England had only consulted him before their rash Crimean venture, he would have saved them from that scathing denunciation passed upon them by the Parliamentary Commission which subsequently inquired into the cause of our failure and of our men's misery. He would have made them view the question of the war before them in its proper light. He could, and he would, have told the amiable politicians who constituted the Cabinet that our army was unfit for war and unprovided with the administrative services or the reserves of men without which no regular army can long exist in the field.

All through the winter I heard the events of the Battle of Inkerman so fully discussed by staff and other officers who had taken part in it, that I came to know its details as I had never known those of any other battle. It was filled with splendid examples of heroism and with episodes that are as striking as any that have been since described by General Marbot.

During the last winter, 1855-6, my immediate chief on the quarter-master general's staff of the light division was Major the Hon. Hugh Clifford, of the Rifle Brigade, a brave, daring soldier, and an indefatigable worker. Many years afterwards he served under me in South Africa, and

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both as my master and as my staff officer I entertained a high opinion of him as a soldier, and a personal affectionate regard for him. He was A.D.C. to General Buller, who commanded the 2nd brigade of the light division at the Battle of Inkerman. In the thick of that fight, when galloping to deliver an order, his horse jumped some high bushes. Upon landing beyond them, he found himself confronted by two Russians. One, as well as I remember the story, he knocked down with his horse, and the other he slashed with his sword heavily over the arm, nearly cutting it off. Some two or three days afterwards, when going round the brigade hospital with his general, they came upon some wounded prisoners. One, whose arm had been amputated, smiled and nodded at him, and when an interpreter was found, the poor Russian said he recognized in Clifford the man whom he had tried in vain to kill, but who had instead nearly cut off his arm. A quaint recognition, a strange addition to their respective circle of friends.

But as I was not at the battle I shall not relate any more second-hand stories about it. When the summer of 1855 had set in, I made many water-colour sketches about our position at Inkerman. Upon one occasion my presence evidently attracted the attention of the enemy's riflemen in the rock-cut chapel on the other side of the valley, and they began to use me as a target. A few bullets whizzed past, to which I paid no attention, but at last they put one into the sloping bank on which I sat, and so close to my feet that I felt the thud it made on entering the ground. I took this to be a polite notice to quit, so, collecting my sketching block and paint-box, I moved off slowly, that they should not have the satisfaction of knowing I was disturbed by their good shooting.

## COLONEL CHARLES GORDON

In a future volume I shall have much to say about "God's friend," Colonel Charles Gordon, in many ways the most remarkable man I ever knew. But as I met him first at the time of which I am here writing, when we were both doing duty in the trenches before Sebastopol, I shall at once say a little about him. We were friends, drawn together by ties never formulated in words. In a conversation I had with him the year he left England, never to return, he told me he prayed daily for two men, of whom I was one.<sup>1</sup>

In these material days of money grubbing, when the teaching of Christianity is little practised and the spirit of chivalry is well-nigh forgotten, I cling tenaciously to every remembrance of our intimacy, because he was one of the very few friends I ever had who came up to my estimate of the Christian hero. He absolutely ignored self in all he did, and only took in hand what he conceived to be God's work. Life was to him but a Pilgrim's Progress between the years of early manhood and the Heaven he now dwells in, the Home he always longed for.

History tells of only one faultless Hero, and His story is set forth in the Gospels. The character of Christ as therein depicted was always uppermost in Gordon's mind. When in any difficulty his first thought was, "What would my Master do were He now in my place?" It was this constant reliance upon his Maker, this spiritual communing with his Saviour upon every daily occurrence in life, that enabled him absolutely to ignore self and take no heed for what to-morrow might bring forth. It was because of this faith that he cheerfully gave up his life in the endeavour to do

<sup>1</sup> I believe the other was Colonel J. F. Brocklehurst, C.V.O., C.B., then commanding the Royal Horse Guards, and of whom I know he was very fond and of whom he had the highest opinion.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

what he believed to be his Master's work, the mission he willingly undertook to Khartoum. To understand that Master's will in all the events of his splendid but curiously varied career, he studied the Bible in a way rarely practised since the early days of Christianity. He was mortal, and was not therefore perfect. But the more I study his noble life the more I am dazzled by its untarnished glory, as the eyes are by staring at the midday sun. To those who would belittle his memory, I can only say, "Go and do likewise."

When I first met him in the Crimea, he was a good-looking, curly-headed young man of my own age, both of us being then in our twenty-second year. His full, clear and bright blue eyes seemed to court scrutiny, whilst at the same time they searched into your inner soul. An indifference to danger of all sorts, or, I should rather say, an apparent unconsciousness of it, bespoke a want of the sense which generally warns man of its presence. His absolute single-mindedness of purpose startled me at times, for it made me feel how inferior I was to him in all the higher qualities of character, and how inferior were all my aims in life to his.

## CHAPTER IX

### Assault of the Quarries and the Mamelon

1855

THE Redan was constructed upon a high detached feature that ran north-west and south-east on the rocky, stony ground lying between the Woronzoff and Middle Ravines. It was about 100 feet below the level of what we called Frenchman's Hill, on which we had opened the first parallel of our right attack. About 430 yards south-east from the Salient of the Redan, were some rough piles of stone, named by us the quarries. They stood on what I may call the backbone of this feature, at the edge of a ridge where the ground dipped rather abruptly towards our trenches.

By the end of May we knew in the engineer camp that all the besieging batteries were to open fire in a few days, preparatory to an assault of the Russian works that were nearest to both the French and English trenches. We subsequently learnt that our attack was to be confined to the Quarries, whilst the French assaulted the Ouvrages Blancs, near the extreme right of the Russian position, and also the Mamelon, between five and six hundred yards south-east of the Malakoff, upon which the enemy had recently constructed a strong redoubt.

At 3 p.m. on June 6, all the allied batteries opened fire, and the very earth seemed to heave and shake from the

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violent concussion of nearly 600 heavy guns and mortars with which we pounded the Russian works. The enemy were somewhat taken by surprise by this sudden outburst of fire from all the besieging batteries. The Mamelon alone replied at once, but in about twenty minutes most of their important batteries were in action also. It was a very hot day, and a piercing sun seemed to broil our brains, badly protected then by the tailor-designed forage caps we wore. The heat told seriously upon our artillerymen and bluejackets, who worked hard at their guns all day. The roar of guns from both sides was terrific. Maintained as long as daylight lasted, it seemed as if "all Bedlam were let out." When we could no longer clearly see the Russian embrasures, our gun fire gradually slackened, and a heavy mortar fire replaced it. This was maintained throughout the night to prevent the enemy from repairing his shattered works or replacing his injured guns. The very sky seemed alive filled with our shells. Their burning fuses streaked the sky in all directions with long lines of light as they travelled, each over its own special parabola, with a seemingly deliberate and horrible precision. As they sped upon their death-bearing mission they resembled fireworks, but we all hoped that each meant destruction to the enemy. Now and then a badly fused shell burst in the air with a loud report, and one heard its great heavy and jagged splinters tear through the darkness with a weird, whistling noise, as of some rushing meteor on its final journey gone. By day you may dodge such missives, but at night one can but listen for their noisy advent, glad indeed when the ear catches the heavy thud with which they strike mother earth as it were in maddened anger.

There were some sixty-six mortars in the British bat-

## THE ALLIES BOMBARD SEBASTOPOL

teries, almost all "13 inch," the shell for which, with its bursting charge, weighed about 200 pounds. Of them we required 500 for each piece, or over 30,000 in all for this bombardment alone. Most of those were dropped into the Redan and its flanking batteries. The reader can therefore picture for himself what must have been the effect caused by such terrible missives in such an enclosed work. However, it is desirable the reader should understand that Todleben had provided well against danger from mortar fire in the construction of all his great works of defence. I can best describe his plan to the non-professional reader by saying he made them with two parallel lines of parapets one within the other. Between them were the guns and all the men who served them, so that shells, unless falling within the narrow space between those two lines of parapets, did no one any harm : all the splinters that flew towards the gun-detachments from the shells falling in the interior of the work, that is, inside this inner line of parapet, were caught by it. This plan, in works like the great Redan for instance, though it required a vast number of workmen, must have saved thousands of Russians from wounds and death during that prolonged siege. We never had men enough to enable us to make our siege works as strong and effective as they should have been. In fact, from the day we invested Sebastopol until the fall of that place, our army was too small, ridiculously too small, for the siege to which a British Cabinet, in criminal ignorance of war and of the soldier's science, had committed England.

Fire was resumed by all our siege batteries at daybreak the following morning, June 7, 1855 ; in fact, as soon as we could clearly see to lay our guns upon the Russian works. It is not easy to describe what being in any large siege



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battery at such a time is like. The gunners and sailors, perspiring at every pore and begrimed with dust and gunpowder, worked with little on beyond their trousers. Volumes of thick smoke in those days of black powder hung round all our batteries in action, making it at times no easy matter to lay our guns effectively upon the enemy's embrasures. Amidst the roar and air-shaking discharge of such heavy guns and mortars, the men, blackened with the smoke of gunpowder, worked in silence. The only voice you heard was that of some young artillery officer in charge of a section as he called out at times some order, such as "Number three gun there, half a degree more elevation," or some other laconic order or meed of praise, such as, "Well done, number five," when a shell from it burst in the embrasure to which its attentions were at that moment specially devoted. If there was any breeze the officer's position was to windward of his guns, in order to avoid the smoke when observing the effect of his fire. It was delightful to watch the coolness of these young artillery and naval officers, many of the former but lately from Woolwich Academy, as with binoculars in hand, they stood in more or less exposed positions as cool and collected as men may be seen at "annual practice" on the Shoeburyness Ranges.

As noon drew near it became evident that our fire was getting the upper hand, and gun after gun in the Russian batteries ceased to annoy us. The Redan looked very much knocked about, and the guns in the Mamelon had been practically silenced. In his history of the siege, General Todleben says the western face of the Malakoff had been almost silenced by the slow but accurate British fire upon it. On the 7th the Mamelon was completely silenced, its face towards us being nearly razed. Orders had been issued

## ASSAULT OF THE QUARRIES

for an assault upon the quarries to be made at six o'clock that summer evening, when, at the same moment, the French were to attack the Mamelon. This would enable those works to be taken during daylight, and would give us the cover of night to make good our lodgment in them and connect them with our nearest trenches.

Colonel R. Campbell,<sup>1</sup> who commanded my battalion, the 10th Light Infantry, was to command the troops in the assault of the quarries. He was a fine gallant little fellow; a keen and ambitious soldier of much experience, he was just the man for such a duty, and he deserved well of his country for the splendid service he rendered all through the night that followed.<sup>1</sup> I had been told off as the engineer to connect the quarries, when we took them, with our trenches to the eastward, in which I took up my position early in the evening of that June 7. The working party to make that connection was there also. I counted its numbers and explained to the officers with it what their work was to be, adding that we were not to begin until evening had fallen sufficiently to screen us from the enemy's view. By six o'clock, everything being ready for the coming attack, a signal was given. It was a moment of intense excitement to every man in the besiegers' works. Captain Barnston, of my battalion, then upon the headquarter staff, had been sent into the French trenches near the Mamelon to see that the signal for assault when made there was understood and acted upon by us near the quarries. When the Zouave told off to hoist the signal flag had done so, he looked towards our works to assure himself it had been seen. At that moment his eyes fell upon our assaulting column as it

<sup>1</sup>He was killed at the head of his regiment whilst fighting his way into the Residency at General Havelock's Relief of Lucknow.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

charged for the quarries. The sight was too much for the impressionable Frenchman, and in a moment he had thrown his arms round my naturally demure comrade, and hugging him in a close embrace, cried out, "Ah ! les braves Anglais ; c'est magnifique."

Throughout a siege, it is amongst the regimental officer's duties to see that his men never unduly expose themselves to the enemy's fire, and in our trenches before Sebastopol one tired of warning them not to show their heads above the parapets. To men so taught for many months, it is a new, a strange sensation to scramble over those same parapets, and then, fully exposed to view and to missiles of all kinds, to double forward and attack in the open. We are all creatures of habit, the British soldier especially so, because of his daily attention to orders, and to the lessons he has learnt from his officers. But towards the close of a siege, when he has to suddenly ignore the teaching on this point which he had previously received, and for the time being to scorn all cover, the change with some is not easily taken in.

From where I was, the attack upon the "Ouvrages Blancs" could not be seen, but I had a clear view of the ground between our advanced trenches and the quarries, and also of that lying between the Mamelon and the French trenches in front of it. As the moment for the assault drew near, each man around me seemed instinctively to hold his breath in a state of pent-up mental pressure. In our hearts, all were deeply, intensely excited, but in true English fashion each strove to gulp down any outward expression of his natural feeling, and to look as indifferent as possible. My own experience tells me that when you look round the men of a storming party you are about to lead, or even to

## ASSAULT OF THE QUARRIES

accompany, and see them "strain like greyhounds on the leash," your heart is much lighter and your feelings far brighter than when you are doomed to watch others storm whilst you look on with all the calmness you can muster, or pretend to. Such I know were my sensations when at six o'clock I saw the British redcoats swarm over our advanced trenches and with that exciting, that terrible British cheer so well known to our enemies all round the world, charge over the space between them and the quarries.

As I looked towards the Mamelon, my blood tingled in every vein when I saw our brave, our gallant allies pour over its parapets in the most dashing style, some of them, in their excitement, even ran out beyond it, making for the Malakoff. Our assaulting column similarly gave way to the enthusiasm of the moment and pushed forward beyond the quarries when they had taken it. But in both instances, beyond making the Russians "sit-up," as our men subsequently described it, this daring did not, and could not under the circumstances, lead to any useful result. The Russian soldiers upon all occasions proved themselves too stalwart an enemy to admit of any such tricks being played upon them by what was at that moment little more than a party of the most daring spirits of a storming party. Besides, the hopelessness of any such attempt is easily understood when it is remembered that our English trenches barely held enough men even for the capture of the quarries. But both the Redan and the Malakoff had been seriously shattered by the concentrated fire they had just sustained. Many therefore thought that had the French commanding engineer's able plan for the assault of the Malakoff three months later been followed upon June 7, we might then have taken both the Redan and the Malakoff. The diffi-

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

culty in all such siege operations, after the successful assault of any line of works, is to have enough men close at hand to back up those who have taken them. It is only in extremely rare cases that the siege-works nearest the point to be attacked will hold more men than are necessary for the first effort. No such works as those of the Redan and Malakoff when taken in any siege can be retained possession of unless the besieger has the means of pouring into them a continued stream of fresh troops. That lesson the English learnt to their cost three months later. The French knew it, and, as I shall describe further on, they had, on September 8, wisely made their arrangements beforehand to meet the difficulty. But imagination was never a strong characteristic of that most gallant and devoted body, our Royal Engineer officers before Sebastopol. This repulse of our daring and enterprising allies in their unprepared rush upon the Malakoff, gave renewed confidence to the enemy. In a moment I saw them stream from the works around it, and charge the gallant but evidently blown Zouaves by whom the unexpected attack had been made. The Russians, pushing their success, re-entered the Mamelon with the retreating French, and my heart sank as I saw that work once more in the enemy's possession. But their success was short-lived, for the French reserves coming up, the enemy were quickly driven from the Mamelon, and I rejoiced to see them running back helter-skelter for shelter in the Malakoff.

Whilst thus intensely absorbed in watching these history-making events and waiting anxiously for the sheltering protection of twilight to begin my allotted task, the message came, that as Captain Lowry had just been killed I was to take over his duty. The task to which that gallant young

## THE QUARRIES TAKEN

Irishman had been told off was to unite the quarries—as soon as we had taken them—with Egerton's pit, the distance between those two places being about 180 yards. I had no time to moralize nor to grieve for the loss of a brave comrade, nor was it a place to think of anything but of one's own special work, for death at the moment sang around us in what seemed a crowd of passing bullets.

I soon made my way to Egerton's pit, and as I clambered over its gabions to get forward to the quarries, "a swish" of "grape" or tier-shot whistled by, and one of the bullets cut open my right thigh. As a wound, it was nothing, for although its mark still remains, it merely cut the skin badly enough to make me bleed profusely. The amount of blood that soon covered my clothes gave me, however, the appearance of a badly wounded man. Indeed, I only refer to this scratch at all because of the amusing incident it gave rise to the following morning.

Upon entering the quarries, I found Colonel Campbell, of my own battalion, in command there. The number of men at his disposal was ridiculously small and entirely inadequate for the double duty of defending the place against the sorties that were sure to try to retake it, and for the formation of a good lodgment there. The parapet built by the Russians was on the south side of the quarries, and was thus behind his men. Whilst, therefore, constantly engaged with those sorties he had also to construct a parapet in front of him, north of the quarries, and between him and the enemy. There was practically very little earth in the locality. Any scanty soil that was there originally had been scraped away by the Russians for the parapet they had made between them and us.

I had soon cut a passage through the parapet of Egerton's

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

pit and had laid out with a row of gabions the communication between the quarries and Egerton's pit. As any plan of our trenches will show, I broke the line of that communication with what I may describe as a kink, in order to defilade the half of it that was nearest to Egerton's pit, the other half, that nearest the Russians, being defiladed by the quarries, which stood on much higher ground and hid that half of my trench from view.

My working party picked and shovelled hard through that night of sorties, heavy firing, noise and shouting. It was the busiest night I ever spent, and the night of the hardest work and most constant fighting I passed during the siege. I do not know how many serious attempts the Russians made to retake the quarries under cover of the night that followed, but in looking back at the affair as a whole, it would seem that when I was not working hard at my flying sap,—which was my special task—I was in the quarries at Colonel Campbell's side, helping him, and cheering loudly to encourage the men around him to hold out against the renewed efforts of the enemy to retake what we had captured.

All the chief incidents of that night are still fresh in my recollection, and I delight in recalling its stirring events. My blood tingles even now as I think of how bravely our men fought upon that occasion. That "war is a horrible thing," is a very nice heading for the page of a schoolgirl's copybook, but I confess candidly that in my heart I always thoroughly enjoyed it. Surely it has a very glorious side to it. You find man at his best and at his worst there. What can be grander than to see men boldly face death for the honour, the glory, and the prosperity of the country they love and whose interests they put before self and all earthly

## ATTEMPT TO RETAKE QUARRIES

considerations ! It is self-sacrifice of a most pronounced type, the acme of noble excitement, the apogee of patriotic enthusiasm.

In the quiet hum-drum of home life and of all its dull humanizing but often vulgar influences, we may moralize over the angry passions which war develops. The heart is easily saddened by thoughts of widows and orphans made to satisfy war's greedy maw ; but what nobler heritage can poor sinful man leave his children than the fact that he willingly died that England might be renowned and great, and her people safe and prosperous ? This is not the outburst of some frenzied poet ; it is the sober, calm opinion of a soldier who knows from experience what war's vile horrors are and who still suffers much from the penalties that it exacts.

Before day broke, I had fairly well accomplished my allotted task, although several partial attempts had been made by the Russians to retake the place we had captured. My working party were thoroughly worn out, but all ranks, I am sure, felt they had made a long step in advance towards the goal our army had so long been trying to reach. The fighting in front of the quarries had been so constant throughout the night that little progress could be made towards the construction of an effective parapet on the Russian side of it. A line of gabions, and stones, and I believe even the bodies of the dead Russians, had been piled up so as to screen our men, if not from shot, at least from view, as soon as daylight should dawn upon us. At some places the gabions had been fairly well filled, and a little parapet constructed. Its strength was soon to be tested. Before day broke I went into the quarries to see how matters went there. I found the colonel of my battalion doing all he could



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

to strengthen his position. But his men were "dead beat." Many lay about snoring loudly, notwithstanding the constant roll of musketry and the occasional booming of guns and the bursting of shells. He was anxiously hoping for reinforcements of fresh men, and was naturally most desirous to see them arrive. Whilst standing with him behind the miserable little shelter which want of earth had prevented him from making better, peering through our glasses into the dark space between us and the Redan, there arose, apparently close to us, that horrible jackal sort of rasping, screeching, discordant yell which with the Russians takes the place of our manly and telling British cheers. We all knew it meant another sortie, and from the hour of night it was easy to understand that it must be the last effort the Russians would make before the sun rose, and that consequently it would be pushed home with all possible strength and vigour. We answered their cry with such cheers as we could get from our tired and pumped-out men. Colonel Campbell and I mounted his tumble-down makeshift for a parapet to give the men heart, and he kept his bugler hard at work. Had I never before heard the regimental call of the 90th Light Infantry I should have learnt it then. The "advance and double" the "alarm and assembly," and many calls also then peculiar to light infantry regiments, followed one another in quick succession. The Russians howled, but there seemed much hesitation about their advance. Doubtless they too had had "enough of it" during the night, and wanted rest also. But I am sure that our cheering imposed upon them and made them think we were confident and anxious they should come on in order that we might destroy them. Had they known our real condition a well led charge of a few hundred Russians would have cleared

## RUSSIANS ASSAULT THE QUARRIES

us out of the place in five minutes. As Colonel Campbell and I stood on the top of his little parapet cheering wildly, I perceived a long column of the enemy through the feeble, misty light before dawn of day. I could distinguish men, evidently officers in front, who were apparently doing their best to get their soldiers forward, but to little purpose. They were at last within ten or twelve paces of us. If I thought at all, it must have been that my last hour had come. I fired my revolver "into the brown" of them, for it was indeed a critical moment. Our men do not, in fact no soldiers, fight their best at night. Each side attributes to the other an unreasonable superiority in strength and an eagerness to engage which is generally fictitious. What would not a hundred English gentlemen acting as a company of private soldiers achieve at such a moment either in attack or defence? Had we then had a couple of such companies there, how we should have sprung upon the head of that Russian column, and, driving it back, we might probably have been able even to enter the Redan with the enemy as they retreated! And if, on the other hand, the Russian officers whom I could descry pulling their men forward to the charge, had had such a company behind them, they would certainly have been back in the quarries in the twinkling of an eye, and its few defenders must have been either killed or prisoners in the space of five minutes. At any rate, they could and would have easily retaken the work they had lost the evening before.

Both Colonel Campbell and I, and without doubt many other officers also, shouted ourselves so hoarse that we could not speak all next day, nor indeed could we do so well for some days afterwards. In no other twelve hours of my life have I ever taken as much out of myself as I did that night.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

With daybreak all danger from further sorties ceased, and I was just able to stagger out of the quarries and literally to throw myself down in the semi-twilight of dawn on the sloping and sheltered ground immediately behind them. I was asleep in a moment. How long I lay there like a log I don't know, but a voice close by woke me at last as I heard some one express regret that I was amongst the dead. I said—as I was afterwards told—"I beg your pardon, I am worth many dead men yet." I found it was the naval lieutenant, Prince Victor of Hohenlohe, afterwards known to so many as Count Gleichen, who had taken me for dead. It was not surprising he had done so, for most of the poor fellows who had fallen during the night's fighting had been carried out of the quarries and placed upon the sloping bank where I had thrown my wearied body to rest. Besides, as I had bled pretty freely from the slight wound I had received in the thigh when the "evening's entertainment" first opened, I was much besmeared with blood when Prince Victor recognized me amongst the numerous dead that lay around me. He gave me something from his flask, and I staggered along as best I could towards the Middle Ravine picket where my groom usually came with a pony for me in the morning. But I had about a mile and a half of tortuous zig-zags and trenches of sorts to get through before I could reach it. My chief difficulty was to keep awake, and as I staggered along I must have had very much the air of a drunken man to any stranger. But I reached the picket at last, where I met a right good trench comrade and a real fighting soldier, Major Maxwell of the Connaught Rangers, commonly known as "Paddy Maxwell," to distinguish him from a Scotchman of that same name in his battalion who was called "Bumble Maxwell." My Irish friend had just

## RETURN TO CAMP

arrived on horseback from a tour of duty as field officer of the day, and at once lent me his horse, as mine had not turned up, and helped me to mount, which I had barely strength to do. I don't know how I got back to camp, but I do know that several times during that ride my "mount" and I nearly parted company. I slept well all that day.

## CHAPTER X

### Repulse of the Allies on June 18, 1855

THE allied armies had been too long stationary, and the very trying months of winter's hardships had sorely reduced the British numbers through want and overwork, and the disease which always results from them. When summer came at last, all ranks were, I think, somewhat "down in their luck." The army of France was very large; ours was absurdly small for the duties it had to perform all over the Empire. Napoleon III could more easily send a division to reinforce his army in the Crimea than we could spare even one extra battalion for that purpose. England's generals, mostly ignorant of war's science, had allowed the army to be surprised at Inkerman, where our loss in battle was so great that during all the subsequent winter months we were compelled to play a strictly defensive rôle. But the recent success of the English and French besieging armies at the quarries and the Mamelon had put new heart into both of them. We all longed for another opportunity of showing what we could do, and hailed with delight the news that we were at last to storm the Redan, and the French the Malakoff. This had been decided at a meeting of the allied commanders on June 16, 1855, and it was arranged that all the besieging batteries should open fire at daybreak the following morning. It was settled

## WATERLOO DAY, 1855

that should this bombardment produce a sufficiently decided effect upon the enemy's works it would be followed by an attack upon both these Russian works two hours after daybreak on June 18. During these two hours of daylight, the heaviest possible fire was to be poured from all the besieging batteries upon the Redan and the Malakoff in order to destroy any new works that might be constructed and any repairs to old ones that might be effected during the preceding night. It was also hoped that this avalanche of shot and shell would so maul the abattis round the Redan as to make good openings through it for our stormers. It could not fail to inflict a heavy loss upon the enemy, crowded as they certainly would be into every part of their works to resist the assault they anticipated, and we expected that it would also dismount a large proportion of the guns that could be brought to bear upon our attacking columns. But this was not to be, for late in the evening of June 17 General Pelissier informed Lord Raglan that he had changed his plans, and that his troops would move forward upon the Malakoff at three o'clock the following morning. This put an end to the two hours' bombardment we intended to have had before the assault was delivered. I do not know for certain why he found it necessary to alter the hour fixed for the assault, but I assume it was because he discovered he could not conceal in his trenches all the troops he intended to employ. Under cover of the night he could mass as many troops as he wished along the line of his siege works in front of the Malakoff, but as soon as day broke, if they remained stationary they would be exposed to destruction. To storm at the first streak of daylight became therefore a necessity with him. But what neither commander seems to have fully grasped was, that we had not as yet sufficiently

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

subdued the enemy's fire to make any assault probably successful. The Russians had an unlimited supply of guns in their great Black Sea fortress, and consequently we were not justified in expecting to assault it successfully except immediately after a very heavy and prolonged bombardment.

I went on duty to the trenches the evening of the 17th, and worked hard all night preparing for the assault we were to make next morning in three columns upon the Redan. The sad events of that morning are only too well graven on my memory. Wild hopes had filled my head during the previous night, and I was elated because I believed we should succeed. It was arranged that Lord Raglan was to take up his position during the assault in No 9, more commonly known as our "eight gun battery." About 1,000 yards from the Redan and eighty feet above it, this battery was a good and fairly secure spot for the purpose. From it one had a good view of the centre of the Russian position that extended between the Woronzoff Road and Careening Creek. The signal for our assault was to be a rocket fired from that battery.

At selected spots I collected the woolsacks intended to fill, or at least partially to fill, the Redan ditch, and also planks to lay in it where we might expect to find boards covered with spikes driven into them like the quills of a porcupine. Such, when laid on the bottom of a ditch, form a serious obstacle, and are not easily crossed by a crowd of excited stormers. Grappling irons to drag away the abattis that formed a close line round the Redan had also to be thought of: and lastly, a considerable number of scaling ladders which were to be carried and placed in position by the naval brigade under that bravest of brave sailors,

## OUR PREPARATIONS FOR ASSAULT

Captain William Peel. All this employed numerous fatigue parties during the night, and kept me busy.

Before day broke Lord Raglan, accompanied by the commanding engineer, General Sir Harry Jones and a numerous staff, had taken up his position in No. 9 Battery, which was on the extreme right of the second parallel of our right attack. Man is not usually at his best in the dull, mysterious hour immediately preceding daybreak. But we braced ourselves for the coming assault, for all in their hearts must have felt as I did, that this was to be no ordinary morning in the history of our nation. We spoke in low tones, but I felt confident we should win, and longed to hear the cheers with which the day's work was sure to open.

In our trenches the troops to be engaged—and they were ridiculously few—were in their places by two o'clock of the 18th, all still under the impression that our batteries were to pound the Russian works for a good two hours before the assault was delivered. But as the sun began to brighten the eastern sky one caught the sound of heavy musketry in the Malakoff direction, which told us the French were already in action, and within a quarter of an hour Lord Raglan ordered our signal rockets to be fired. In my opinion this was a mistake, unless of course it was done in fulfilment of a promise made to General Pellissier that come what might he would storm whenever the French did so. I never believed we could hold the Redan if the Malakoff remained in Russian hands. According to my views, therefore, until the French had taken that work we should have restricted our offensive operations to mere skirmishing towards the Redan and to making feints to help the French by inducing the enemy to believe we were about to assault. The Malakoff was the key of the position, and when it was



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taken the Redan would fall as soon as the French had turned the Malakoff guns upon it. The Russians could not, in my opinion, have held it under the crushing, enfilading fire from the Malakoff and the cross-fire our batteries could bring to bear upon it. As for our left attack, it was not expected to take any part in the attack. But, together with many others, I had long held the opinion that our commanding engineer had made a serious mistake in originally giving it the importance he had done. One half of the troops allotted to it would have been ample to have kept the enemy from taking possession of the broad spur upon which its approaches had been constructed, and the other half would then have been available for the right, which was our serious attack.

I don't believe the Russians had learnt from spies or other secret sources that our assault was to be delivered on June 18. They had evidently guessed our intention on the natural assumption that Louis Napoleon and his people should wish that date to be remembered in history as the anniversary of a victory won by the allied armies of England and France, and no longer as exclusively associated with the destruction of the great Napoleon and of his splendid army at Waterloo. The fact that the Russians expected to be attacked that morning came home to me in an instant when, upon the advance of our storming-columns, I saw the superior slope of all their nearest works covered suddenly, as if by magic, with their soldiers. All their batteries opened fire, not only upon our attacking columns, but also upon our nearest batteries, No. 9 coming in for what seemed to me as more than its due share of attention.

If the ground over which our three British columns advanced upon the Redan looked at first like a field made bright with red poppies, it seemed, in the twinkling of an

## REPULSE OF THE ALLIES

eye, as if struck by a terrific hailstorm that had swept them away, leaving the field strewn with the poppies it had mown down.

No British or French soldier entered either the Redan or the Malakoff that day, except the few who may have done so as prisoners. Of that I am certain, notwithstanding what others with more imagination than accuracy of statement may have alleged to the contrary. It took very few minutes to realize that we must fail, for no forlorn hope that ever mounted the deadliest breach could have faced such a fire, or could, in fact, have lived under it many minutes. The fire of shell and round shot upon No. 9 Battery continued to be disagreeably hot. I was talking there to a friend in the Connaught Rangers when a round shot took his arm off, covering me with small pieces of his flesh as it did so. He fell, but jumping up quickly, said he was not hurt, being for the moment unaware that he had lost an arm. In another moment I saw Sir Harry Jones—our commanding engineer in the siege—tumble backward from Lord Raglan's side, the blood pouring through his white hair from a bad scalp wound. His head only had been exposed as he and the Commander-in-Chief both peered over the parapet towards the Redan, and though his wound was not in itself a very bad one, it was "a narrow shave," and seemed all the more horrible in a white-haired old man than it would have done in a younger soldier.

The affair was soon over : it was a solemn moment to all of us, for we felt humbled in spirit by failure. The whole manner of our assault was not creditable to our commanding engineer, who did not seem to understand that you can ask too much from even British soldiers. Upon this occasion, what was asked from them was beyond the power

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

of men to give. Our plan for the attack was simply idiotic, and was bound to fail. I watched the handsome well-bred features of Lord Raglan as he spoke sympathetically to Sir Harry Jones, upon whose advice, I presume, he had agreed to the attack being made. He was quite calm and collected, with all the grace and high-bred manner that invariably characterized his every action. I walked behind him out of the battery to see he did not lose his way in our somewhat puzzling trenches, and when we reached the right approach that led back to the first parallel, we fell into a stream of men carrying stretchers, each with a badly wounded man upon it. On the first stretcher that Lord Raglan encountered lay a young officer—I withhold his name and regiment for the sake of the old and historic corps to whose ranks he was a disgrace. As to himself, I hope his hateful and undistinguished name has been forgotten as he himself should be. Lord Raglan, going up to him in the kindest way, said in the most feeling and sympathetic tone and manner, "My poor young gentleman, I hope you are not badly hurt?" or some words to that effect. This brutal cur—I subsequently knew the creature well—turned upon him, and in the rudest terms and most savage manner, denounced him as "responsible for every drop of blood that had been shed that day." Wounded though this ungenerous fellow was, I could with pleasure have run my sword through his unmanly carcass at the moment.

Ten days afterwards the brave and gallant soldier Lord Raglan died, as I have always thought, of a broken heart. In common with most of the young Army school of that day, and we were all prejudiced and badly informed on the point, I never thought he was equal to the conduct of a great war. He seemed to lack the imagination, the military instinct,

## LORD RAGLAN'S DEATH

the knowledge of war's science and the elasticity of mind and body that is essential for the general commanding an army in the field. He had an extremely difficult game to play. The Government of the day, plunging stupidly into war with a great European Power of whose military strength it was apparently ignorant, had invaded the Crimea with little knowledge of its geography and still less of its rigorous climate. When disasters ensued, as is usual with politicians in power, the Ministry had striven to throw the blame upon the general commanding in the field and upon the staff who had not even been selected by him. But Lord Raglan's military virtues were many. His steadfast courage, and his kindness of heart to all about him, were taking traits in his character, whilst his well-born dignity of manner had doubtless much influence over foreigners upon all of whom God had not been so bountiful in natural gifts.

The respective losses in killed and wounded of all ranks during the bombardment of June 17, 1855, and in the assault upon the day following were, British, 1,500; French, 3,500; and Russian, 5,400. Of the three British and three French commanders who led the six attacks, four were killed and one disabled. Their names were: General Campbell and Colonel Yed, killed; and General Eyre, wounded.

## CHAPTER XI

### The Battle of the Tchernaya

ON August 16, 1855, I was one of a small party of engineer officers who were engaged in drinking tea and munching biscuit in my tent before daybreak, when the sound of heavy firing, in what at first seemed to be the Balaklava direction, caught our ears. We had risen at that early hour with the intention of riding to the French and Sardinian camps lately established on the Fedukine Heights overlooking the Tractir Bridge on the Tchernaya River. Running from our tents, we quickly realized that the firing was increasing in intensity and that a battle was raging in the neighbourhood of that bridge. Our horses had already been saddled for our start, so we were soon making at a fast gallop for the high point where the Woronzoff Road begins to descend from the Sebastopol plateau into the Balaklava plain below. When we reached it, the panorama spread out before us was a very fine military pageant. The Russian foot, still some forty-five or fifty thousand strong, were in full but leisurely retreat towards the Mackenzie Heights, whence they had advanced under cover of the previous night. They seemed to be in two lines of battalion columns at short intervals, with flanks well protected by about five or six thousand horsemen. A couple of hundred field guns—some of which were still in action—warned the French not to press too closely upon the heels of their retreating enemy.

## THE BATTLE OF THE TCHERNAYA

We were told that our allies had been informed through spies that this attack was impending, and yet they allowed themselves to be surprised. This considerable Russian army had deployed during the preceding night within a couple of miles of the French pickets, without their knowledge, for the purpose of surprising and driving the French from their *tête du pont*, and of crossing the river there to secure the Fedukine Heights beyond.

We spent little time, however, in admiration of the scene before us, but, descending in haste to the plain below made quickly for the Tractir Bridge. I soon learnt the particulars of their attack, which did not add to the reputation of Prince Gortschakoff, who was said to be then in command.

Several French and Sardinian batteries were plying the retreating enemy with shell, and I saw a great rocket plump into a battalion column, and, exploding as it did so, break it up, at least for the time. Our Royal Artillery battery of four thirty-two-pounder brass howitzers took an important part in this action, driving back the Russian guns that were inflicting heavy loss upon the Sardinian outposts. From what I heard, the attack was badly planned and executed, being never pressed well home, though the Russians forced their way into the *tête du pont* from which the French had bolted somewhat hastily. The dead and wounded lay in small heaps all round the vicinity of the bridge over which the Russians had poured in considerable force. It is not easy to estimate the number of dead and wounded upon any field, but I should say that I saw at least 2,000 Russians killed and wounded lying about upon both sides of the river near the bridge.

The heroic action of a battery of French horse artillery had done much towards the eventual success of the day.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

The Russians having captured the French *tête du pont*, boldly crossed the river and also the aqueduct that was but a very short distance behind it. The main body must have been slow in its movements, for no large Russian columns ever seemed to have crossed the Tractir Bridge. Whilst the Russians "fiddled about," instead of pushing boldly forward and up the Fedukine Heights, this splendid battery of French horse artillery arrived at a gallop, unlimbered close to the bridge, and came rapidly into action. Horses and men were mostly destroyed and the guns and limbers nearly knocked to pieces by the Russian fire, but it effectually stopped the enemy's advance at a time when every minute was of inestimable value to both sides. To gain time to enable the French to come into action was what the French commander desired most, and it was secured by the noble self-sacrifice of this horse artillery battery. What was most essential to the Russians was to get at least a division into position on the high ground beyond the bridge, and this they were prevented from accomplishing by the splendid conduct of that horse artillery battery. The gun teams were lying about, mostly dead, though a few horses, evidently in great pain, were struggling to gain their feet, whilst here and there others with broken legs, unable to rise, with a touching look of calm resignation that I can still see in my mind's eye, were nibbling the short grass around them. The conduct of this battery upon that occasion was an instance of self-devotion that deserves to be for ever remembered in the history of the French Army, full as that history is of noble deeds done by its chivalrous soldiers. Had I been the general officer commanding our army in the Crimea I should have given the senior surviving officer of that battery the Victoria Cross. It was on my

## THE BATTLE OF THE TCHERNAYA

way back to camp along the Sebastopol Aqueduct by the Lower Tchernaya, that I saw for the first time Mr. Russell, the justly celebrated "special correspondent" of the *Times* newspaper. He was not popular with the Army, and those officers who had the privilege of his acquaintance were generally looked upon with suspicion as anxious to be made known in England through the columns of that greatest of all daily papers. The consequence was that his friends and those whom he praised were not always those who were the most highly appreciated by the thoughtful men amongst us. I fully recognized even then how much we owed him for his outspoken denunciation of the disgraceful manner in which our army had been sent by the Government then in office to the Crimea without land transport of any kind. But at that time I was intensely prejudiced against him, a feeling that was still far stronger against the officers who were his friends. Many years afterwards, when I had the privilege of becoming intimate with him, I became much attached to him. Endowed with the most genial disposition and the warmest of Irish hearts, he endeared himself to all who knew him well. His sympathies are always with both individuals and nationalities whom he conceives to be oppressed. The fact that one of the opponents in any important struggle is much stronger than the other, no matter which may be in the right, inclines him to sympathize with the weaker side. The impression abroad in the Crimean army was that he was over kind to even the glaring faults of his best friends.

The Russian army was very indifferently handled throughout this badly planned battle, and its commander gained no practical advantage from the serious loss he sustained in killed and wounded.



## CHAPTER XII

### My Last Night in the Trenches

**M**Y last tour of duty in the trenches was the night of August 30—just a week before the final assault on September 8—when at about five p.m., in company with Lieutenant Dumaresque, of the Royal Engineers, I reached the Tool Park behind the first parallel, commonly known as Gordon's, or the Twenty-One Gun Battery. When going on and returning from duty, I usually rode from camp down the Middle Ravine, to where the picket of that name was posted, and from which a trench ran up the hill communicating with the right of Gordon's Battery. The engineer park of tools, etc., etc., was immediately behind and nearly in the centre of that battery, and in it the engineer officers and non-commissioned officers usually assembled at each relief to arrange the distribution of duties and working parties for the following twelve hours.

The siege was drawing to a close. We all felt it could not go on much longer, for our losses in killed and wounded per week were then great, and our little army could not bear that strain much longer. No more battalions were to be had from home or the colonies, and the untrained boys sent out to us as drafts were only soldiers by courtesy. They were in every way inferior even to the poor narrow-chested creatures who now usually constitute about one-half of our home army. The head of our sap was then

## MY LAST NIGHT IN THE TRENCHES

still about 200 yards from the ditch of the Redan. That approach was the left of the two new saps we had lately pushed forward from the fifth parallel, at a distance of some 300 yards apart. These were being executed under considerable difficulties from the very rocky nature of the ground, the close proximity of the enemy's works and of the rifle pits made by the Russians between them and us. This was specially the case with the left of these two approaches, where a subsidiary branch of the Middle Ravine on our right formed an easy and a sheltered road from below to the Redan plateau, over which we were trying to push these advances. This natural road enabled the Russians at night to bring up troops, collected below in the ravine without our knowledge, and with them to pounce upon our covering parties and to rush the "approach" behind them. Here let me say, that long experience has taught me that all well-disciplined troops who are bold enough to attack in the open by night invariably succeed, at least for the moment, and often achieve some important permanent advantage. In a siege they are often able in the first few minutes of their success to destroy works that had taken many days and nights of hard and perilous labour to construct.

These new approaches of ours towards what I may call the *enceinte* of Sebastopol, were made under conditions that would have horrified the military engineers of former times. With them it was a recognized law—as I had learnt from text books—that no sap or other works should be attempted in close proximity to the besieged place until the artillery fire of the garrison had been practically subdued in that quarter. This was so far from being the case with us at Sebastopol—a great naval arsenal, with immense

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

stores of guns and shot and shell—that whilst we had at all times to be most careful not to expend gun ammunition, except during our regular bombardments, the Russians were always ready upon any provocation to open a vigorous fire upon our trenches. In fact, these two near approaches towards the Redan were pushed forward by us whilst all the guns in it and the adjoining works were ready to come into action at any moment; and they often did so, there being, apparently, an unstinted supply of ammunition in all of their batteries.

The sappers having been told off to their respective duties, it was arranged between Lieutenant Dumaresque and myself that I should take charge of this left advance, and try to push it on during the dark as far and as quickly as I could. I was also to try before daylight to get some good idea of the ground immediately beyond it, as a help to the officer who should be in charge the following night.

I soon reached what was to be my station for the night, and at once reported myself to the lieutenant-colonel in command of the troops there. He gave me a working-party of 150 men, to whom I supplied tools, picks to one half, shovels to the other. I had also fifty gabions ready to take out to put in position beyond the head of this flying sap. I knew there was a Russian rifle pit about 100 yards beyond where I should be working, and this I felt it was necessary we should take if we hoped to make any useful progress. I begged the lieutenant-colonel to allow this to be done, stating my reasons for urging the request, but he did not see the matter in the same light.

There was upon this occasion, and too often throughout the siege, a want of enterprise on the part of the field officers commanding in our advanced trenches, and I think this grew

## MY LAST NIGHT IN THE TRENCHES

worse towards the end of the siege. Their great object generally seemed to be, to keep things quiet during their tour of duty, and to leave disagreeable work to those who relieved them. Upon this particular night the lieutenant-colonel was a middle-aged gentleman, and as I thought at the time, devoid of all military zeal and enterprise. Personally brave I have no doubt he was, but he lacked that hardness of nerve required to order men to execute dangerous duties. He was not the man who could coolly lead troops under a heavy fire, and inspire them with confidence and daring as he did so. This is the rarest quality of nerve in man; and of all whom I ever knew, I would name General Sir James Outram as having possessed it in a superlative degree. Whenever, my reader, you meet such a man, mark him well, for he is born of God to command.

Having had a good look at the ground I was to work over, with the help of an engineer sergeant and a few sappers it did not take long to place my fifty gabions in position. This addition to the sap extended it about thirty-five yards nearer to the enemy, and if I could but make a trench behind these gabions, and fill them with what I dug out in making it, I knew that by the morning I should have done a good night's work. I had soon distributed my working party behind the newly-placed gabions, but if I was to avoid panics when so close to the enemy, and to get good worth out of the working party, I knew well that I must protect them from surprise whilst so employed.<sup>1</sup> I urged this necessity upon the officer commanding, and begged of

<sup>1</sup> The official diary of the siege is most inaccurate in all details regarding the events of this night in the Right Approach; my memory serves me well in all such matters, and those details up to the moment of my being wounded are graven upon it, though I have written but few of them here.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

him to push forward a good line of double sentries. But, as was only too usual, I found him much disinclined to do as I wanted in this matter. I could only induce him to push out a few men towards the enemy as a covering party. I accompanied him to post them, but he would not listen to my request to take them out to where I wished him to post them. As it was, they were not more than about twenty yards beyond the furthestmost of the fifty newly-placed gabions, and all my remonstrances upon the inadequacy of his precautions against surprise passed unheeded.

I may as well mention here that men so used in advance, when as close as we were then to the enemy, generally crawled forward into position, and when there, either knelt or lay down, their rifles at full cock, ready to blaze at any one who approached them in front. Twenty or thirty well nerved men so placed, and firing coolly into any small sortie, were always quite enough to drive it back. But by night even the most courageous often think they see an approaching enemy or other dangers, which have no existence except in their own heated imagination. I have many times known the bravest soldiers on a dark night make absolute fools of themselves. When the human eye and mind are for some long time on the strain by night (and the darker it is the more probable the delusion), neighbouring objects are apt to assume distorted proportions. Stones become men creeping towards you, and a few scrubby bushes are, by the heated imagination, easily mistaken for bodies of the enemy. Those who have done much night picket work know this well, and how the most serious panics have generally their origin in the most trifling occurrences. We do not sufficiently practise night operations during peace.

## A NIGHT WORKING PARTY

The ground was rocky, with very little earth, and our gabions were therefore mainly filled with stones. In this condition they are very dangerous, for when struck by a round shot, these stones are sent flying about like the bullets in a round of case. No one spoke. Orders were given in a whisper, and all smoking was strictly forbidden. But the clatter of our tools on the rocks and stones must have soon drawn the enemy's attention to our locality, and I felt from the first that we should not be left long unmolested.

The men had set to work with a will, for all knew that the harder they picked and shovelled the sooner they would secure at least some little cover and protection from the enemy's bullets. All went well until past midnight, and my spirits rose, only to be soon dashed down all the lower. It was, I believe, about one a.m., the gabions being then more than half full, when from close by us there suddenly burst forth that jackal-like Russian yell, then familiar to us. Its weird rasping and discordant note grated upon the ear, for it had nothing in common with our manly and imposing British cheer. It meant of course a sortie. In a moment the few look-out men in our front were back upon us, all breathless from running, and for the instant bereft of reason. The Russians were close at their heels. Nothing is so infectious as sudden terror, especially in the dark. In the first blush of its alarm it often converts staunch, brave men into senseless cowards. This instance was a striking example, for at once panic seized my working party, and all ran for their lives as if the devil were after them.

Up to this I had spent the night in walking up and down behind the men at work, and when this alarm was given I must have been about their centre. In my anxiety to stop

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

them, I jumped down into the shallow trench they had dug, and caught one of the crowd by his belt behind as he was rushing madly towards the parallel in rear. I must have been tumbled over by the rush of others behind, for I was trodden on and a little "knocked out of time" as I struggled to my feet. When I had done so, I found myself alone in the trench with the Russians on the far side of my partially constructed parapet. I can still see the face of the Russian soldier who, in apparent surprise, peered at me from the other side of the gabion where I was. In another moment I should be a prisoner, for a line of half filled gabions alone stood between me and that dreaded fate. There was nothing for it but to run; this I did without a minute's hesitation; and I must confess, oh, my reader, that my pace was no dignified regulation double, for I went as fast as my legs would carry me. I had only to run about sixty or seventy yards to reach cover amongst the trench guard in the parallel, but even in that short run the indignity of my position was painfully present to me. The consciousness that I was running away maddened me, and when I once more found myself amongst those who had beaten me in that discreditable race, I freely vented upon them the anger I felt at the ignominious part I myself had been compelled to play in the affair. I spoke my mind pretty freely all round, and in a fever heat of rage I abused them as a pack of cowards. My indignant epithets were too much for the British soldier, for in the twinkling of an eye, maddened evidently by my reproaches and ashamed of their panic, they, without orders from any one, rushed pell-mell over the parapet with that glorious cheer which only men of British descent can give. There are no soldiers in the world who could have withstood such a charge; not even the

## A RUSSIAN SORTIE

Russian, and they are about the most stubborn of all fighting men.

In a shorter time than it takes me to write this, we were back again in our flying sap. But alas ! in the few minutes during which the enemy were in possession of it they had torn down the greater part of my fifty gabions, and had rolled many of them down the hill to a small graveyard in the bottom of the ravine to our right.

My working party and I were now on much better terms, the men in good fettle and ready to do anything I asked. I told the unadventurous lieutenant-colonel commanding in the parallel that I could do nothing until he had taken the rifle pit which I had previously pointed out to him, and which seriously interfered with the progress of our work. It was within a hundred yards of us, and was a source of constant danger. He had now realized how much he was to blame for having refused to take it when I asked him, early in the evening, to do so. He now consented to its capture, and it was carried in daring style by a fine gallant fellow, Captain Pechell, of the hard fighting 77th Regiment, and I was at last given a sufficient party to protect me against surprise from the ravine on our right. We soon picked up the gabions that had been rolled down the hill, and having replaced them in position, the men were quickly at work again refilling them. I felt sure it would not be long before the enemy would open fire from the Gervais battery, whose guns, between five and six hundred yards off, bore directly upon our sap. I had been told to examine the ground beyond the spot where I should leave off work at daybreak, and to inform the officer who relieved me in the morning what it was like, etc., so that the further progress of the sap might be all the easier to project. This



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

could only be effected in the dark, and as soon as my working party was once more in full swing I went to the furthest end of the sap, where I began, as best I could in the very dim light around me, to sketch the position in my pocket book. A sergeant of the Royal Engineers was with me,<sup>1</sup> and two of his men at the end of the sap were just behind me. I discussed the lie of the ground in front with the sergeant, but as I did so my eyes wandered constantly in the direction of the above-mentioned battery. Pausing for a moment, I gripped with my left hand a spike of the gabion in front of me, and at that instant the flash of a gun from the very spot I was looking at dazzled my eyes. I had just time to cry "look out," when I was lying on the ground in a confused heap with the two sappers who had been standing behind me. I think I was under both, but I was certainly under one. As the sergeant—who marvellously escaped unhurt—subsequently told me, both were killed; one had his head taken off, the other had a shoulder and lung carried away.

I don't know how long I lay unconscious in that horrible heap of mangled humanity, but out of dim hazy recollections comes one little half-dazed fancy of returning reason. I was certain I was alive, but equally sure that I had lost the top of my skull. I longed to put up a hand to examine my head, but shrank from doing so because of what seemed to me, in my dazed state, the horrible certainty that if I did so my fingers would inevitably dabble in my exposed and protruding brains! My next remembrance is of being

<sup>1</sup> Alas, when I was wrecked I lost my trench pocketbook and am not sure of the sergeant's name, but I think it was Godfrey. All the sergeants of the Royal Engineers whom I knew in the trenches were brave soldiers and very capable and superior men.

## BADLY WOUNDED

marched slowly off, the engineer sergeant supporting me under one arm, a private under the other. At a funeral pace we thus wound our way through the narrow boyaux for nearly half a mile to the doctor's hut immediately behind the quarries. I was still dazed and could barely walk from drowsiness. I must have presented a horrible appearance, for my left cheek lay down over the collar of my shell-jacket. I was much cut about the face and body with stones, and covered with blood, not only from my own many wounds, but from those of the two poor fellows who were struck down with me. Though able to walk slowly with help, I was too dazed to feel pain, and half asleep, I longed to lie down and doze. I could not talk, nor could I have stood alone from sheer drowsiness. Of my solemn procession to the doctor's shambles I remember only one little incident, and I believe it was the noise it made that wakened me to consciousness and so to a remembrance of it. As we passed through the batteries in the quarries, where we kept a large supply of picks and other tools, there fell all round us a hail of small round shot—about one or two pounds weight each—which rattled with great noise on the shovels, etc. The Russians had of late been in the habit of firing from very large mortars bucketfuls of these small shot, and at times of hand grenades, into our nearest batteries. The small shot was specially fatal, for in the dark they could not be dodged as we commonly dodged those shells whose whereabouts was indicated by their burning fuses. The surgeon's hut was made with a splinter-proof covering, somewhat like a magazine. There the wounded were patched up sufficiently to prevent them from bleeding to death until they could be taken to a hospital in camp and thoroughly overhauled at leisure by a doctor

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

armed with all due appliances. Upon reaching the boyaux leading to this doctor's hut, I found myself at the end of a long queue of all ranks waiting their turn to be examined and stitched up temporarily. The doctors were busy, and naturally anxious to get one off to camp. When my turn came, I was still too sleepy and stupid to state my case, but the careful and attentive engineer sergeant was my spokesman. They looked me all over. I had apparently only one serious wound, though many ugly cuts and scratches. My right eye was bunged up, and that they bandaged, and were proceeding to stitch up my left cheek when I remonstrated. I could feel something sticking in my jaw, and told the doctors, who said it was my jawbone that was broken. I insisted on further examination, which ended in one doctor holding my head between his knees, whilst the other with a forceps pulled out a large piece of jagged rock.<sup>1</sup> I felt easier when it was out. The sergeant got me a stretcher and four men, by whom I was carried back asleep to my tent in the engineer's camp. There I was overhauled by the Irish doctor attached to the engineers, whose Connaught brogue sounds still in my ears. A good and amusing fellow, but, I should say, a very indifferent surgeon. In a few days I was well enough to stand the journey in a cacolet to the hospital established at the Russian Monastery of St. George, on the rocky sea coast between Balaclava and Kamiesch Bay. It was at this monastery that our telegraph cable had been landed.

Captain Sheehy, of the North Staffordshire Regiment,

<sup>1</sup> The engineer sergeant, when he came to see me in my tent the next day, brought me this stone wrapped up in a very blood-stained piece of newspaper. I kept it for some years as a trophy more curious than pretty.

## IN HOSPITAL

was the assistant engineer in charge there. He and I had shared the same tent in the engineer camp during the summer, so I knew him well, and had a great regard for him as a friend and a soldier. He was a brave dauntless and amusing Irishman without a taint of guile, and blessed with the most loveable of unselfish dispositions.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> He had converted into a dwelling place a cave amongst the rocks of a steep gorge that led down to the sea. He took me in there, and its semi-darkness soothed my lacerated eye, which has never since been of any practical use to me.

## CHAPTER XIII

### The Fall of Sebastopol 1855

ON September 7 Captain Sheehy went early to the front on business. Upon his return he told me he had learnt in confidence, in the engineer camp, that the grand assault of the Russian works would be delivered the following day about noon. The French were to attack the Malakoff and the little Redan, and we the great Redan. Few but soldiers can fully appreciate how this news affected me in my then helpless condition. Delighted beyond measure to think that our day of triumph had come at last, glorying in the anticipation of a great national victory, my selfish heart sank within me: I could not help it—what a strange, selfish creature is man! My personal disappointment was terrible. For several months before I had ceased to expect I should survive until the end of the siege. So many of those around me in the engineer camp had fallen, that I felt, or thought I felt, that my own time must come sooner or later. But what I had not contemplated was that I should live until the assault was delivered and yet be cut off from all share in it. I had done nearly nine months of trench work, not in the left attack, where the engineer duty was comparatively easy, but all spent in the right attack, which was our real, our serious attack upon Sebastopol. I there-

## MY SERVANT'S PLUCK

fore felt it hard that at the end of all that long labour by night and day, I should be cut out of what I, in my rebellion against God's will and forgetful of His mercies to me, deemed to be my just reward in the matter.

My friend started for the front after dinner, and I was left in his lonely cave far from all society, to brood over what I thought was my unfortunate luck. I was in low spirits. My good eye was still too inflamed to admit of my reading, and I was indeed lonely and depressed.

Whilst thus brooding over what seemed to be my unhappy fate, my servant, Private Andrews, of my own regiment, came into the cave. I at once saw by his manner that he had something he wanted to say to me. At last, with much diffidence, first resting on one leg, then on the other, a sure sign he had something on his mind that he disliked telling me, he said he had just heard that our battalion was to form part of the assaulting column detailed for the following day. I looked at him from my unbandaged eye, feeling certain of what he was about to say, and at last out it came: he "could not allow his regiment to go into action without him." I pretended I was angry, told him he was a fool, as he would most probably be shot, for I knew him to be as brave as men are made, but I felt drawn to him by his announcement in a way I had never been before, much as I had always liked him and admired his pluck. At last I said: "Very well; I will lend you a pony to-morrow to take you to the 90th Light Infantry Camp, but you must promise to gallop back here as soon as the Redan is taken." This he said he would do; and accordingly very early next morning he started off for a "day's outing with a storming party," that had been told off to take a very strong work by escalade, that was defended by about

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the finest infantry in the world, by men in fact who were fully as brave as our own. As I saw my faithful, my very faithful servant, ride off, I felt inclined to cry ; I felt deserted, "down in my luck," helpless and lonely. The hospital huts where the doctors and patients lived were a few hundred yards from me. I was thus alone in my cave. It soon came on to blow so violently that even the roar of our guns came to me feebly. Weak in strength and in constant pain in my eyes, my wounds fastened up with sticking plaster, I lay upon my bed listening to the wind howling down the narrow rocky gorge upon which my cave opened. I felt utterly miserable. The doctor came at his usual hour and renewed my bandages, always a pleasant relief to the wounded, and he strove to cheer me up. He was a curious fellow, very attentive to his duty, and very proud of his profession. He knew nothing about horses, but had purchased one the day before, attracted chiefly by its fine mane and tail. That morning his Greek servant had run into his tent, holding up the tail which had come off when he proceeded to groom the animal. He was grotesquely sad over this affair, which he described amusingly ; but seeing me so down in my luck, he strove to cheer me up by laughing over his misfortune and at the chaff that was in store for him, and at the prospect of having to ride an almost tailless pony, amidst the jeers of his brother doctors. We discussed the event coming off "in front," but never doubted the result, and when he left me I could not turn my thoughts to any other subject. I went over in my mind the *pros* and *cons.* and the chances, and above all, what was at stake. I knew how much our men had been demoralized by the long siege. We had been for many months teaching them to avail themselves of cover, abusing

## I ATTEMPT TO MOUNT

them if they exposed even their heads over a parapet. Now they would have to follow their officers over the open and under a concentrated fire to assault very strong works defended by a well sheltered European enemy, who would shoot them down by volleys. A very long siege is destructive to that discipline which is so essential to success in all operations requiring reckless daring, but especially so in the assault of places. I could see the whole thing in my mind's eye. With every parallel, every boyaux, every fold of ground near our trenches and between them and the Redan I was familiar. I saw my own regiment—or rather what then remained of it—huddled together in the fifth parallel waiting for the signal. How I discussed to myself the respective traits of my brother officers, how each would act. How confident I was that whatever befel all would lead their men straight. I had no confidence in our generals; brave men, but, with few exceptions, of little use as commanders, because, ignorant of war as a science, they knew little of their duty as leaders.

Then I began to catechise myself. Why was I not there? Were my wounds of such a nature that I could render no service in front? I felt I could walk, and thought how my conscience would for ever after reproach me for not being there. Why should I not try and escape without the doctor seeing me? At last I could stand it no longer. I dressed; took up a saddle and went some way up the hill to a ledge where my remaining pony was fastened. I can see him now: a little weak grey thing, that looked miserable with his tail turned to the wind, whilst clouds of sharp sand flew past him. On went the saddle, which I could only girth up with much difficulty and very loosely, for I was very weak. I tried to mount, but in vain; my



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

strength was exhausted, and the dust blown by most violent gusts into my face knocked me back as I strove to do so. The one eye I could see with was still much inflamed, and the sand now made it smart badly. Ashamed at my failure I sneaked back to my cave, and kept carefully secret, even from my host of the cave, the fact that I had made this attempt, too shy to confess that in the mental agony of the moment I had striven to carry my worthless body to the spot upon which all my soul and thoughts at the time were feverishly concentrated. I could not wish my greatest enemy to undergo what I suffered in mind that day, and especially at that instant. It blew very hard all the morning and afternoon, and as I lay on my two-foot wide camp bed in the subdued light of the cave, my mind nearly worked my body into a fever.

At last in came my faithful Andrews, and as I jumped up on his approach I saw he was smiling all over. Hurrah! we had won! He had gone into the Redan with his company and had come away at once, as he had promised me, having galloped hard to be the first to bring me the good news. He said the losses had been heavy, but he could not tell me the name of any one hit. I was another man at once, and sat down to write home. I was delighted at our national success, and proud to think that my battalion had been, as he told me, the first into that Redan at which I had gazed with so much interest, almost daily, for the last nine months.

Some two or three hours later Captain Sheehy, the owner of the cave, arrived, covered with dust and looking glum and downcast. I thought he meant at first to pretend we were beaten, and then tell me the good news. "I know all about it," I said; "you can't impose on me, for Andrews

## FALSE NEWS OF SUCCESS

has been in the Redan, and came back here some hours ago." His answer was : " That may be, but everything has gone against us. We were in the Redan for nearly an hour, but were beaten out of it. The whole thing has been painfully mismanaged." I was struck dumb at this news. The life blood seemed to leave my heart. I did not think, nor at the moment care, about our loss, but of the honour of England, the old fame of our army. It was galling that the French should have succeeded whilst we had utterly failed. I felt ashamed of our army, and yet I knew in my heart, what I am now certain of, that the fault lay rather at the door of those who planned the attack than with the regiments who made it.

For several days after many of my brother officers came to see me, and I heard from the lips of men who had entered the Redan, and been a considerable time in it, what had taken place, and I noted well in my memory their views as to the cause of our failure. My engineer friends gave me their side of the question, and being very soon afterwards appointed to the general staff, I learnt the head-quarter views upon it also. I think I soon came to know as much of what had taken place, and was as well qualified to express an opinion upon the various causes of the failure as any one—I knew most of the actors, those who had planned the attack, and those who had tried to carry out their faulty plan. Examining the British scheme now with a matured judgment and some experience of war, it is to me extraordinary how men of ordinary military intelligence could ever have hoped for success from it. It was as faulty in every detail as it was puerile in conception. Sir Harry Jones, the commanding engineer, was, in my opinion, most to blame, for he at least ought to have known better.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

How any one who knew our narrow trenches could have hoped that supports and reserves could be led through them in time to be of any use to the troops who stormed is beyond my conception. The French, whose leaders and whose senior engineer officers were far better masters of their trade, acted very differently. They had drawn a line, as it were, with a ruler over the plan of their trenches from the Middle Ravine to the Malakoff, and wherever that line cut a parallel or a trench of any sort, there they placed a party with picks and shovels to make a wide opening through the parapet and trench the moment the signal for the assault was given. The result was, that within a few minutes of that signal being given, there existed a straight wide road between the two points I have mentioned down which poured, over the open, the columns intended to support the assaulting body. Down that road there even galloped a battery of horse artillery during the worst time the French had that day—when they were beaten out of the little Redan—which came gallantly into action close to that work. It was a splendid feat of high-spirited daring, worthy of the best traditions of the French army. Whether it “was war” or not I cannot say; I do not care. The battery was utterly destroyed, but the feat was certainly one of those daring deeds that make history in an army, and which go so far in a nation’s life to make its men brave, and keep alive amongst its people that intense devotion to duty which causes their soldiers to die nobly for their country and for its honour. It was a glorious, a noble example of self-devotion, and I hope that amidst all the many miseries through which the French army has since passed, the remembrance of this magnificently heroic feat of arms is still cherished.

## FRENCH PLAN OF ATTACK

By this road the French assaulting columns received a steady flow of support, whereas, when our advanced trenches were emptied in the first five minutes of the closely packed assaulting columns, empty they long remained. They could only be refilled by the slow process of men following one another like the tail of a kite, in Indian file through the miles of zig-zags behind. In fact no sensible provision had been made for affording the assaulting regiments any reasonable or effective support, and yet even the military school-boy knows that the first element of success in every assault is a constant pressure of supports from behind. If any gap of even five minutes' duration occurs in that line of pressure, misfortune will probably ensue. It is that pressure from behind which gives confidence to those in front. Remember what a strain it is upon the nerves of poor weak human nature to be in that front rank. It is not all composed of heroes unless it is—as it always should be—composed of daring, reckless volunteers. But no such call was made. No appeal was addressed to the imagination or to the fighting instinct of our men. Had volunteers been asked for, a forlorn hope of say 200 dare-devil men and officers would have given a chivalrous, an infectious interest and energy and dash, and a reckless and romantic spirit to the whole affair that was a sadly wanting element in all the plans for the operation which culminated in our defeat that day.

Every one who was responsible for the scheme of that day's work bungled sadly, and upon them and not upon the troops employed I unhesitatingly place the disgrace of our horrible failure at the Redan. It was the commanding engineer's business to have pointed out the impossibility of effectively supporting an assault by troops marched in

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

single file through our miles of narrow trenches. Why should I not write all that I felt at the time when the whole thing was brought before me by the narratives of those who had been first into the Redan and the last to leave it? But I refrain from doing so. Let the judges in this case be men who did not personally know those who were responsible. Subsequently in my career I came to know well almost all the generals that day engaged, and I was able to gauge their characters and their military value.

As soon as the leading battalion had entered the Redan, General Windham, who was in command, evidently perceived the hopelessness of the whole scheme our wiseacres at headquarters had made for its capture. There were no supports coming on, and apparently none that could come on in time to be of any use. He then, in, I suppose, the thoughtless hurry of the moment, decided to do what the reputation of the bravest could not stand, and what was without doubt the worst thing he could have done, he decided to leave his command to shift for itself without a leader, and go to the rear to look for support. According to my views on the subject he should under no circumstances whatever have left the Redan. He had accepted the command knowing what the plan of attack was, and if it was obligatory upon any man to have died there that obligation was his. Our only chance lay in having an able, vigorous general on the spot to arrange for the defence of it with the troops he had, and they were but a confused handful composed of many regiments. When he went back he left his men without a leader, without any one to tell the regimental officers what to do, or where to place their men. Within forty-eight hours of the event I had gathered from my brother officers who were in the

## OUR REPULSE AT THE REDAN

Redan up to the last moment, doing nothing and not knowing what to do, that there was no one there to give them orders or to make any arrangements for the defence of the place they had taken. For it must never be forgotten that they did take the Redan, and the fact that we were beaten out of it was not the fault of the gallant and devoted soldiers who stormed it, but of those who planned such a ridiculous assault, and who left them there without support.

The French, when beaten, too often cry out, "*nous sommes trahis.*" The officers who entered the Redan that day were incapable of making any such public or ridiculous charge against their superiors, but in talking over with me, their brother officer, the events of that day immediately after their occurrence they were open-mouthed in their condemnation of those in authority who were responsible for the plan of attack and for its execution.

I draw a curtain over my remembrance of what I learnt from my brother officers, and from others, at that time regarding this disaster. I content myself with saying that had Sir Colin Campbell been given command of the whole business, and allowed to make his own arrangements and plans, and to employ the Highland Brigade, who had practically suffered no loss during the war, we should never have been beaten out of the Redan on September 8. This is only an opinion, but it is founded upon a full knowledge of what took place, and as such I state it for what it is worth.

When the military critic studies the siege operations before Sebastopol, especially those carried on by the English army, he must never forget how absurdly small was the army by which it was undertaken. As for that of

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

France, its strength was being constantly added to. Reinforcements were poured into the Crimea by the Emperor Louis Napoleon; but we had none to send. We had no Army Reserve to supply our losses in battle or from disease. All that England could do was to send out one by one the few weak battalions that had been left at home when the army embarked for Turkey. Many of these—mine, for instance—had been already freely bled in order to fill up to war strength the regiments at first sent to Bulgaria in the foolish hope of thereby frightening the Russian Czar! I think the 90th Light Infantry gave over a hundred of its best Scotchmen to the regiments of the Highland Brigade, and that was a serious loss to our already weak battalion. In fact, we never had enough men to warrant us in taking the large share we did in the siege of Sebastopol. Had any far-seeing wisdom guided our Royal Engineer counsels when we first reached the heights above Sebastopol, we should not have taken over the siege operations that were involved by our occupation of the ground on which we established our Left Attack. Had we thus concentrated all our efforts upon what we named the Right Attack, that is, upon the high ridge of land lying between the Middle and the Woronzoff Ravines, we should have had quite as much to do as the size of our army warranted. Our attack would then from the first have been solely directed against the Redan. I have no hesitation in saying that the main element in the destruction of our army in the winter of 1854-5 was the inordinate strain thrown upon it by the extent of front we from the first attempted to cover with our siege operations.

On October 1, 1854, the fighting strength of our army was a division of cavalry and five divisions of foot, of which

## MILITARY SECRETARY'S LETTER

there were fit for duty about 2,000 sabres and 18,000 bayonets, with the usual proportion of horse and field batteries. We broke ground on the night of October 7, when our total strength in sappers and miners was under 300 of all ranks ! The allied armies were never strong enough to invest Sebastopol, and consequently the enemy were able to pour reinforcements into the place to whatever extent they thought fit. To that fact we must attribute the inordinate length of time to which the siege of a city, defended only by improvised and unreveted works, was prolonged.

I was amply rewarded for any service I had rendered before Sebastopol by being specially brought to the notice of the Commander-in-Chief by General Sir Harry Jones, and by the following letter from the military secretary in answer to it.

HORSE GUARDS,

*October 8, 1855.*

SIR,—Having laid before the Field Marshal Commanding in Chief the letter which you forwarded from Lieutenant-General Sir H. Jones, reporting the zealous and meritorious manner in which Captain Wolseley, of the 90th Regiment, assistant engineer, had performed his duty in the trenches, and stating the high opinion which you entertain of that officer, whose uniform zeal and good and gallant conduct you consider to render him deserving of promotion, I am directed by Viscount Hardinge to state that he has caused this very honourable testimony to the merit of Captain Wolseley to be placed on record, but as Captain Wolseley has only been three years and about seven months in the service, he is ineligible under the regulations to be promoted to the rank of Major, for which otherwise, in



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

consideration of the service described by Sir Harry Jones, he would have been happy to have recommended him.

I have the honour to be,

(signed) E. YORKE.

His Excellency General Simpson.

## CHAPTER XIV

### Appointed to the Staff—War Ends, 1855-6

THE doctors who attended me were strongly of opinion that I should return home to obtain the best possible advice about my injured eyesight and I thought so too. I resigned my position as assistant engineer, for, Sebastopol having now fallen, I had no intention of working any longer with that corps. I had been willing to help in the glorious work of the trenches, but I had no notion of settling down to make roads, construct watering places, or to do the other camp work to which the Royal Engineer officers would now be relegated, and which they did so admirably. But all my plans were changed by receipt of a message that Sir Richard Airey, the Quarter-Master General, wished to see me. I was given to understand that he meant to appoint me to his staff. I accordingly rode over to Headquarters and saw him. I knew him only by sight and reputation, but I knew that all the young Army looked upon him as the one eminently able man we had amongst our generals. I longed to be on the staff under him, for I knew it was the sure road to distinction if I did well, and I knew that under him I should learn my profession in the best school. When shown into the little den at headquarters that he had as an office,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

there was an officer whom I knew well sitting writing at a table in the corner. He was a clever fellow, and a better artist than he was a soldier.

Sir Richard Airey was very complimentary as to my conduct during the siege, and said he had selected me to serve on the staff under him. I thanked him and was very grateful, in fact I was in the seventh heaven of delight, when in a moment the offer became as it were a Dead Sea apple in my mouth. He said he wanted a good man to go to Constantinople to represent the Quarter-Master General there, and as matters had not been going well, and there was a great deal to do there, he had selected me for the position. I grew crimson as he looked at me, but pulling myself together with great difficulty, I said how much flattered I felt by his selection of me for such a post, but that nothing would induce me to take up any military duty outside the Crimea. That if I left it at all it would be to go home, as the doctors advised me, to see an oculist in London. He was, or pretended to be, very angry, and enlarged upon the importance of the post I had refused, and then turning suddenly round to my friend in the corner, said: "Captain —, will you accept it?" The answer "Yes" was given with eager pleasure. He went, and what is more, obtained a brevet majority at the end of the war for his services there! However, within a day or two I was appointed all the same to be a Deputy-Assistant Quarter-Master General, and was ordered to report for duty to Major Barnston, of my own regiment, who had been for some time on Sir Richard Airey's staff, and was one of the very best officers, in fact one of the most efficient men in the Army. We were at once sent off into the Baidar Valley with the French column that had moved out there,

## SURVEY AT BAIDAR VALLEY

our duty being to complete the military survey which the Quarter-Master General's department had been long employed upon. The weather was lovely, the scenery very pretty and enjoyable, and I was with the man I liked best in my regiment. He was an able and a first-class staff officer, who had graduated at what was then called the Senior Department. I owe him a great deal, for he taught me much, being many years my senior. It was a delightful time of rest after the heavy siege work. I was soon hale and strong again, my wounds were healed up and nearly forgotten, though the loss of the sight of one eye was a sad drawback to my pleasure.

We were always well in advance, sketching the ground as far as we dared to go. One morning we were nearly taken prisoners not many miles from Tchorgoon. We had been in a village near the Russian outposts the day before, and had made friends with the Tartar butcher there.

We determined upon beginning our work that morning from the neighbourhood of his house. As we reached it, his wife, a very pretty young woman, ran out, and in a most excited manner pointed to some smoking horsedung on the road and then pointed towards the lances of a Cossack patrol, the men of which, having at the same moment caught sight of us, started at a gallop in our direction. We had just time to turn and escape, for mounted on English horses we soon left the Cossack ponies far behind. All the Tartars in these villages hated the Russians, and looked upon us as the Sultan's allies who had come to deliver them. They were consequently always most kind and hospitable. The method taken by the butcher's wife to make us realize that the Cossacks had just been

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

at her house was clever and effective, as we could not communicate in words.

When the autumn weather broke, the roads soon became bad, rain fell heavily, and it grew very cold at night. The French force was withdrawn, and we returned to Army Headquarters. I was at once posted to the Light Division, then commanded by Lord William Paulett, commonly known as "Ginger Bill" in the splendid regiment he had commanded, now the Durham Light Infantry.

I served as Deputy-Assistant Quarter-Master General under Major the Hon. Hugh Clifford, V.C., who was acting as Assistant Quarter-Master General for Colonel James Airey. Clifford was a most energetic, hard-working and practical officer, not read in the science of his profession, but a real soldier by instinct. He was, however, so over-anxious to do everything himself that he seldom consigned to me any but the most subordinate duties. I was only twenty-two, and he was much my senior in age. It was no easy matter to make my seniors realize that one so young as I was could know anything of staff work. All those around me in positions such as I then held had been many years longer in the Army than I had been, and looked upon me as unfit from youth for my position.<sup>1</sup> In the other half of the hut which I occupied thenceforward until the army began to embark lived a colleague of the same rank as myself on the staff. He was a good, clever, odd creature, who liked to live alone,

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Clifford subsequently served under me in South Africa, and was to me, who had formerly served under him, a loyal, hard-working staff officer. By his careful management he then saved England many a hundred thousand pounds during the Zulu War.

## THE HON HUGH CLIFFORD

and did not care for any one's society. He knew little of staff work, and had obtained his berth through family interest. He was very amusing, but suffered terribly from indigestion. One night I was roused by hearing such a noise in his half of our hut that I called out, "What on earth's the matter with you?" The answer was, "Oh! nothing serious; I am kept awake by a horrible indigestion, and am only having some exercise with a skipping rope to try and get rid of it." I wished him and his skipping rope far away at the moment. At the beginning of the war he had been in a Highland Regiment, and when it received orders to embark for Turkey the officers had a mess meeting to discuss what, if any, modification of the Highland uniform and equipment was advisable in order to make it more suited for modern active service. Many suggestions were made and discussed, but before the meeting broke up, my tall friend rose and said he had a proposition to make. "As they were aware," he said, "they all carried a knife and fork as part of their full dress equipment, and his proposal was that they should also carry a spoon!" A moment of terrific silence followed his speech, and then there burst upon him from all quarters, especially from the many English and Irish officers in the battalion, a howl of execration. How dared he to thus turn into ridicule the dress and appointments which they had inherited from their Highland ancestors? Happily for him he was a Scotchman himself of undoubted lineage, or they might in their rage have torn him to pieces. Of course he made the proposal somewhat in ridicule of the many crude ideas and suggestions put forward by others upon the occasion. He was full of this sly, fine humour, which made him a very pleasant companion, but which

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

did not upon the occasion I refer to commend him favourably to his brother officers. He was, I imagine, too clever for them.

Our second winter in the Crimea was a great contrast to the first ; all our men were well housed in wooden huts ; cooking was done under cover, and there was a sufficiency of firewood and of food. The men were well looked after, and we had a very good time of it. We had sports and amusements for them in fine weather, and discipline became somewhat "tightened-up" from the lax state into which it had sunk from overwork, bad and insufficient food, and also as a rebound from the strictness with which all military duties had been enforced prior to the war. But the boys that came out with each draft from home were worse than ever. One was ashamed to command them. There were plenty of grown men to be had, but the Government had not the wisdom to make the pay of the rank and file in the Crimea good enough to tempt well-grown men to enlist for service there. When will our rulers awake to the necessity of paying the British soldier at the market rate of wages, as is done in the American army, which, as far as its members go, is, I think, the finest army in the world ?

In February, 1856, a horrible-looking little ruffian, who had recently arrived with a draft from home, had murdered an artilleryman in one of the light division hospitals. He was tried by general court-martial and sentenced to be hanged. It was announced that a free discharge and £20 would be given to any man in the Army who would act as hangman, but as no soldier responded to this offer the authorities were in a difficulty. At last a wretched little driver of the lately raised Land Trans-

## DIFFICULTIES AT AN EXECUTION

port Corps accepted the duty. As the prisoner's battalion belonged to the Light Division, the arrangements for the execution devolved upon its Assistant-Adjutant-General, now General Sir Julius Glyn. A gallows was duly constructed by the carpenters of the Royal Engineers and temporarily erected in a stable, where the volunteer hangman was carefully instructed how to perform his gruesome work. During the night before the sentence was to be carried out, the gallows was transferred to the high ground immediately in front of the divisional headquarters and erected where there was ample space for both Brigades of the Division to parade around it.

To make sure of the hangman's presence at this parade, he was kept for the night in our staff stable. The parade was formed early the following morning, and General Lord William Paulett commanding the Light Division, together with his staff, were in position close to the gallows. Some time passed, but the condemned man did not appear. At last our Assistant-Adjutant-General was descried galloping towards us. Upon reaching the gallows where the staff were collected, he said in a somewhat excited voice, "Good heavens, my Lord, the hangman pretends he is mad, and positively refuses to carry out his bargain." Drawn up in a body close by us at the gallows were the provost marshal and the police sergeants of the Division. Lord William, turning to the Provost-Marshal in the coolest possible manner, as if he were giving the most usual order, said: "Captain Maude, you will have the goodness to hang the prisoner." I watched the dismayed captain's face as he heard this order, and I thought he changed countenance. But if he did so he soon pulled himself together again, for he calmly turned round to his provost sergeants and



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

said: "Which of you will hang this man?" One of them stepped forward and said, "I will, sir."

I shall not dwell further upon the solemnity of the scene. The "Dead March in Saul" was played in front of the murderer as he was marched slowly round the division and finally to the gallows, where he was hanged for his cowardly crime. When the troops had marched away to their respective parades, the little creature who should have been the hangman was taken into a neighbouring stable, and by order of the provost-marshal was there and then soundly flogged. As this punishment was inflicted by the provost sergeant who had to perform the unpleasant duty of executioner in his place I feel sure it was carried out with no light arm.

Coming back from riding one afternoon in the winter of 1855-6, I had just dismounted and gone into the staff hut of the Division to report what I had been doing, when suddenly the earth was shaken as if by an earthquake. The hut seemed to rock and its roof to open. We ran out, and looking to where the noise came from, saw a huge pillar of fire and smoke being shot up into the sky above the siege-train park. A shower of falling bullets soon rattled round on all sides, whilst the burning *débris* of ammunition boxes and of other artillery material seemed to fill the air. Great flames burst upwards from the park, and small explosions followed quickly one after the other. Knowing the quantity of ammunition and of filled shells there was in it at the moment, one felt it was only the beginning of a possibly fearful catastrophe. My horse having only just been taken to its stable was still saddled, so I was soon galloping to the scene of this awe-inspiring conflagration. It was not what had already exploded,

## AN APPALLING CONFLAGRATION

but the knowledge that the great amount of powder in the park and of small arm ammunition in the windmill close to it might be ignited at any moment that impressed me. As I neared the park, a considerable number of Congreve rockets went up and exploded in all directions. Fortunately they were without their sticks, so did not travel far. Upon reaching the windmill, that stood to the right of the light division, a fresh hail of bullets rained around me. The violence of the first explosion had beaten in the wooden roof of the mill, and it seemed that everything burnable in the artillery park was already on fire. The booming noise of exploding shells smote the ear on all sides, and columns of sharp-tongued flames shot up momentarily through the surrounding clouds of dense smoke. It was a truly appalling sight; men wounded by the explosion were being carried off to a safe distance, and in every sense hell itself seemed for the moment to be open before and around us, all apparently expecting each moment to see the earth crack into some great yawning chasm and engulf us. A small amount of calm reflection would have told each and all of us that as the windmill contained nothing but small arm ammunition we need expect no sudden explosion from it. But the mill seemed to warn us to keep at a distance if we wished to avoid sudden death, and few reasoned at the moment. Close by, there was fortunately one of the chief watering-places of the Light Division, where every blanket that could be laid hold of was thoroughly saturated with water before being passed up to the roof of the mill. A ladder was brought from the Artillery Park and placed against the windmill. A gallant young officer, Lieutenant Hope of the Fusiliers, ran up the ladder, and was soon on the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

roof. In my mind's eye I can now see that tall, handsome fellow as he stood on the mill distributing the wet blankets over the broken rafters of the roof, and emptying the water buckets as they were passed up to him for that purpose. His was a fine example of cool self-possession and contempt for danger in the midst of appalling excitement, and we were all subsequently very glad when the Queen conferred the Victoria Cross upon him; no man ever deserved it better. A panic is, alas! very catching. But on the other hand, the cool daring of even one young officer in any such sudden and very dangerous emergency, will often—as in this instance—steady a mob of unreasonably excited soldiers. A self-possessed man like gallant young Hope upon this occasion is often worth a king's ransom to the nation.

In the spring of 1856 we had races in the Light Division. We had had several meetings during the siege, and they were a great source of amusement to all ranks. One of our first "race meetings" had been, I think, in the early spring of 1855. They were got up chiefly to amuse and put some life into us, for all ranks were then somewhat depressed in mind and body. At one of them I saw an amusing incident. The races were for ponies—almost all the horses had died during the winter—and as every officer owned a pony the entries were numerous, but the animals were mostly poor, weedy, badly fed creatures. At this meeting one of the hurdles was a little higher than the others, and every pony refused it. There was no getting over it, when my gallant friend, the late Major Arthur Herbert of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, rode up on a big mule and said: "Gentlemen, allow me to give you a lead over." He was a fine rider, and putting his old moke at the hurdle, he cleared

## CAMP RACES

it easily, the others following the lead amidst loud laughter and cheers from all ranks. The men always took a great interest in these races, backing their own officers to win.

The mention of races reminds me of an amusing match made, I think, in the autumn of 1855. It was of a clever pony against a big hunter, each owner to construct four out of the eight fences to be negotiated, all eight to be fair hunting jumps. The owner of the horse of course built up big walls and dug wide ditches, whilst the pony's master made intricate and nasty doubles that very few horses could manage, being too big to clear and yet too contracted for a horse easily to jump in and out of. One was specially constructed with two sets of extremely stiff rails placed so close together that no horse could well jump in and out between them. In each case the jockey had secret orders not to attempt it until his adversary had broken down one of the rails in his attempt to get over it. The result was that as the two horses neared this double their pace grew slower and slower, until at last both pulled up before it, each saying, "After you, please," to the other. The race ended there, but the general opinion was, that as the fence in question had been constructed by the pony's master, its rider was bound in honour to have attempted it.

At the end of the war, some time before we embarked, there were races on a grander scale, open to the French army as well as to all our Divisions. An A.D.C. at headquarters had a remarkably good hunter and very fast, which he sold a week before the meeting came off to a well-known Count in the French army. It won the principal race of the meeting, and the excitement among the French of all ranks was great beyond measure, and amusing to watch.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

I think it was a flat race, so the pace was fast throughout, and if they had won a battle from us greater than Waterloo, the rejoicings could not have been louder. They forgot or ignored that the horse was English, had lived on English oats, and had only been in French hands a few days or weeks. Perhaps my words may be tinged with the feeling of irritation which I certainly experienced at the time when I saw the Englishman thus beaten by a Frenchman at a sport then essentially British.

When peace came in 1856, I may truthfully assert that very many in our Army regretted it much, for we felt that whilst at the final assault the French had won—and they well deserved their brilliant success—we had failed. Owing to the want of genius exhibited throughout on the part of those who directed our siege operations, we deserved to fail. I remember how sad I felt when the peace was announced, though no personal considerations influenced me. Indeed, as far as I was concerned, peace was more to my interest, as I could not, according to Army regulations, be promoted until I had been six years in the Army, and I had then only served four.

When writing this my mind harks back to all my youthful aspirations and ambition, to my determination to rise in my profession or disappear in the attempt. I suppose I must have had something in me that caused me to be often singled out for positions far beyond my years, but I felt at the time that my good fortune was the result of my close attention to all duties, no matter how small, that bore upon military work : to my insatiable greed for information upon war, its science and its practice : to my study of military history, to my intense love of fighting and of all out-of-door amusements and manly exercises. So

## YOUTHFUL ASPIRATIONS

much was this the case, that I felt bound to control my aspirations and conceal my longing for distinction, and the real enjoyment which even the hardships of a soldier's life afforded me. I was surrounded by men, plucky gentlemen many of them—I daresay far pluckier than I was—who, when put to it, would fight any one, and would fight to the last. But they would do so as a matter of course because they were gentlemen ; I did it because, in addition to this feeling, I loved the sport, the occupation, the danger, and the game of trying to overcome the difficulties of any job that might be set me and the rapturous satisfaction which success gave. Some of my companions did their work in a more or less perfunctory fashion, because it was their duty to do it. I threw my whole heart and soul into the occupation, and deserved no credit for doing it, because in itself the work was a delight to me.

General Luders, commanding the Russian army in front of us, paid the allied armies a visit in the spring of 1856. It was arranged that he should review the French army in the forenoon, and then with his staff have lunch at our Army headquarters and review our army in the afternoon.

We knew the French had lost in men very heavily during the winter from disease. When the siege came to an end we had little night duty, and were well fed, well housed and our daily wants well provided for. On the other hand, during the autumn and winter the French, for economy's sake, had stopped the extra "field rations" issued during the siege. The consequence was, that whilst our men had abundance, our allies were badly provided with food and comforts. They had recently buried many thousands from typhoid fever in a graveyard near one of their large hospitals, not far from our Headquarters, and

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

we believed the number shown in their returns as "fit for duty," did not exactly agree with their parade states. Three staff-officers were told off to count their strength as they marched past the Russian general. I was one of those three, and we were posted at different points on the marching-past line, so as to calculate independently one of the other. All three computations were very much the same, and made the number to be not more than about 30,000, and yet we knew they had turned out every man they could. Our strength on this occasion was quite equal to that of the French. The anger of an enraged people at home had wakened up our Ministers, and consequently our troops were very well cared for between the fall of Sebastopol and the declaration of peace. Besides all this, our staff had been cleared of its most useless men, and—for the most part—officers of military merit and ability had been appointed to replace them.

Our review passed off well ; the men were young, but they had picked up a great deal, and thanks to good food and a healthy life in camp, had grown and developed much during the quiet of the past winter and spring. The Highland Brigade was a splendid body of soldiers. It had lost few at the Alma ; had not been at Inkerman, nor was it during the winter of 1854-5 employed in the trenches where constant work had decimated the rest of our infantry. In fact, it had done extremely little trench work at all, and had consequently lost few through disease, and we may assume that those few were the weakly men belonging to its historic regiments. Unlike all our other Brigades it was a better fighting body than when it landed at Eupatoria. According to my estimate of troops, it was the finest Brigade I ever saw in any country. As

## PARADE OF THE ALLIED ARMIES, 1856

its battalions marched past at a swinging pace, their pipes playing "The Garb of Old Gaul," any nation might indeed have been proud of them. They were the redeeming feature in our "show" upon that occasion.



## CHAPTER XV

### The Army Embarks for Home — I Rejoin the 90th Light Infantry at Aldershot, 1856

WHEN it was decided to embark the army, Colonel Ben Halliwell, Assistant Quarter-Master General to the 4th Division, was sent to Balaclava to report upon the manner in which the army embarked and upon the appliances used in the operation, etc., etc. I scarcely knew him, but on my merits he asked to have me as his assistant, so I reported myself to him forthwith. Colonel Jock Mackenzie, the very able Quarter-Master General's officer at that place, had left for England to give evidence before the Royal Chelsea Committee which was the outcome of a report by a Colonel Tulloch, and a Doctor McNeill upon the alleged failure of Sir Richard Airey in the performance of his duty as Quarter-Master General in the Crimea.

Colonel Robert Ross, of the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders who had been Mackenzie's Deputy-Assistant at Balaclava throughout the war, was now in general charge there. An old captain and brevet-major who has been a good adjutant and was subsequently a very good regimental commanding officer—but with no genius of any sort—was helping him, and we all four messed together in the crowded little village of Balaclava. Colonel Halliwell was an eminently able and useful staff officer, a first-rate artist, a remarkably good mili-

## LIFE AT BALACLAVA

tary surveyor and draughtsman, and the best-hearted and most genial of men. He was a universal favourite, and the bravest of soldiers, the most loyal of subjects, the most attached and lovable of friends. He was fond of good living and wished to have champagne for dinner every day. This did not suit the above-mentioned brevet-major, to whom strict economy and saving money was the greatest pleasure in life. He complained of the expense of our mess, so as a concession it was arranged that we should content ourselves with cheap claret except when friends were dining with us. As our quarters, formerly the Russian commandant's official residence, was a sort of "house of call" for all our friends, it was seldom indeed that we dined without guests. But whenever it came to his ears that no one was expected to dinner that evening, dear old Ben Halliwell at once disappeared to prowl about the village bent upon picking up some stray straggler to dine with him, so that he might be justified in having his favourite beverage at dinner. Be it remembered that we had been living for eighteen months chiefly on garbage washed down by hot tea made with bad brown sugar.

Whilst at Balaclava embarking the army we lived well, and Soyer, the French chef sent by our intelligent Government to teach the British soldier how to prepare his food ! used occasionally to cook for us. It was an expensive arrangement, for whilst so employed he required to have his thirst—which was always great—assuaged by copious draughts of champagne. He was a most amusing fellow, full of good stories, which he told well. Asked upon one of these occasions if he were married, he said, with a sigh, that he was a widower. There was a little pause upon this announcement, and then he described the many virtues of his late consort. But we gathered from him that her temper was extremely irritable,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

and from what he said she must have had a sharp tongue. I daresay her patience was often tried by her laughing but doubtless loving husband. Looking very solemn he ended his story by saying he had buried her in Père la Chaise Cemetery, having inscribed on her tombstone, "*Soyez tranquille.*"

Colonel Halliwell had a wonderful soldier servant, whom he usually dismissed about once a week, but who took no heed of the dismissal and went about his work as if nothing had occurred. He also had a wonderful horse called "Malt," given to him by some relative who was a great brewer, hence the name. He must have ridden at least eighteen stone, but this horse carried him well, though it had received a bullet through the nose at the Battle of Alma.

We made a pleasant trip to the Alma and to Baktshiserai whilst I was at Balaclava; Ross and Halliwell, both heavy men, in a Russian conveyance, and Colonel Pocklington, a visitor from Malta, and I on horse-back. I mounted the latter on my good bay barb, rode a grey barb myself, and took my servant on a pony—the best in some respects I ever had. Let me here record what I gave for the horses I owned at the end of the war, all bought in the Crimea. For an Irish hunter I gave £50 or £60, and sold her to an officer for about the same sum just before the army embarked for home. She was my best mount; for the bay barb I gave £60 to Count Gleichen—then known as Prince Victor of Hohenlohe. For the grey barb I think I only gave £25, though for work he was worth two of the bay, but I bought him from an old French colonel whom he used to kick off every time he mounted. He was really a very quiet, well-behaved animal, but had a trick of kicking somewhat violently for the first few moments when

## EXPENSE OF STAFF SERVICE

you mounted him. For the bay Bulgarian pony—bought at Brigadier-General Buller's sale—I had given £25, and he was worth twice that : his fault was shying, which I always thought he did to amuse himself. A white baggage pony completed my stable. He was a poor weedy animal, but docile and steady with a pack saddle on his back. I do not remember what he cost me. The two barbs were stallions. I could find none to buy them when the army embarked, so I sent them to Constantinople with two saddles, bridles, horse's clothing, etc., where all were sold for £25, about the price and value of the saddles and other horse gear that went with them. For my bay pony I received thirty shillings, and the grey pony, having carried my small kit to the wharf where I embarked for home, I turned loose to be picked up by some Tartar in search of an animal. I give these details because I want to show how expensive it often is to serve our country on the staff in the field.

One of the pleasantest trips I made about this time was by sea in a steam tug to Yalta, where is the Czar's Crimean palace. The world has not a more lovely spot ; the high range of mountains coming down in terraces to the Black Sea edge—a bluer sea on a fine day does not exist. The spurs of these hills are entirely clothed with trees and the greenest of bush and scrub, through which peep on all sides the reddes of rocks and scarped declivities, and the whitest of red-tiled houses. The sun was very hot when I landed there one Sunday—we had too much to do on week days for any amusement—and it seemed to draw from out this scenery of deep and lovely tints a rich blue mist which appeared to vapourize if not actually to spiritualize all the rich, highly-coloured surroundings. I had, before the war ended, looked down upon this coast from the Arch at the Phoros Pass over which

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the Woronzoff road runs, where the traveller from inland catches his first glimpse of the sea. I remember that as I lunched there, drinking in the cool breezes from the sea and lost in admiration of the exquisite view, I was still not unmindful that I might at any moment have had to gallop away from some Cossack patrol, then often to be met with in that neighbourhood. I remember also how the view over Yalta and the Czar's palace had astonished me with its intensely lovely colouring and beauty, and how its quiet repose struck me from the contrast with my ugly surroundings in the noisy bustling arid dusty camp upon those dreary rocky heights overlooking Sebastopol, which seemed at the time to have been already my home for years.

I was one of the last of our army to leave the Crimea. As I stepped on board the steamer that was to take me home, I scarcely knew the little village I was leaving. There were the same old ruined Genoese fortifications with their picturesque, round flanking towers, and our wooden huts still studded the distant valley, the village itself and the heights above it. A few Tartars were listlessly moving about in search of anything that might make their wretched homes beyond the Tchernaya somewhat more comfortable. No one else was to be seen in any direction. The crowds of British officers and soldiers that used to throng its narrow muddy streets all were gone—dispersed in many directions, some to India, others to Mediterranean garrisons, to North America, or to home stations : in fact I may say to every quarter of the globe where our flag flies.

As we steamed out of the deep and land-locked little harbour, so lately crowded with shipping, now without even a boat upon it, there came back to my mind the thoughts and hopes and aspirations of some twenty months before, when,

## OUR CRIMEAN AND SPANISH WARS

with my battalion, I first steamed into it. How very much older I felt since then. Men certainly do age quickly on hard active service such as we had had in the trenches before Sebastopol. I asked myself, "Had I done well?" "As well as I expected?" I cross-examined myself, and thought I might and ought to have done better. I could not be promoted major until I had been six years in the Army, and felt aggrieved that the time I had spent in the field in Burmah and in the Crimea was not allowed to count double. Had this been the rule I should have returned home very proud indeed of being a major. But on the other hand, when I remembered my hair-breadth escapes, how near I had often been to death, I felt I was ungrateful to Providence to complain, and consoled myself with the reflection that I must surely be reserved for something good, and that the ambition I indulged in might yet be more or less satisfied.

Thus ended our expedition to the Crimea, so full of eventful memories. I feel proud indeed of the manly courage of my race as I think of the gallant men I served with there, and I can never forget the uncomplaining manner in which our Rank and File endured want and misery in every form.

Our Crimean War cannot be compared to that we waged in Spain early in the century, and yet it was full of dramatic interest. The victory on the Alma did every credit to the splendid discipline and courage of the British regiments engaged. But the plan upon which it was fought showed an utter ignorance of tactics on the part of whoever framed it. No attempt was made to reap any strategic advantage from its fortunate result, a fact that cannot be ignored by the military student. The battle of Inkerman followed—that battle so full of glory for the Regimental Officer, Non-

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Commissioned Officer and private. But owing to the incapacity of our Generals we were there surprised, and were only saved from destruction by the fighting qualities of our race, and by the timely arrival of French troops to help us. As long as men value the dogged determination which characterizes the British people, the history of that battle will be read with pride by all English-speaking men and women.

Who that served with the army before Sebastopol can ever forget the misery suffered uncomplainingly by our soldiers in the winter of 1854-5? Companies then tried their best to do the duty of battalions, and in most instances a few men, weak in body from over fatigue and bad food, represented the company.

I never had any pity for myself nor for my brother officers, for once or twice a week we could afford to buy in Balaclava enough wholesome food to keep us alive for days. Besides, we all recognized the advantages of our position. Rewards, promotion and the praise of friends awaited our safe return home. But such were not in store for the most commendable of patriots, the Non-Commissioned Officer and the private soldier. An ugly silver medal was to be his only reward; yet he fought like a hero and suffered with the steadfastness of a martyr. I wish I could put into suitable words my admiration of his character. His devotion to duty, his determination to maintain at all costs the credit of his regiment, is far beyond any praise that I can express in words.

I know that our Generals and our staff were not what they might have been under a different military system. But I agree in the report of the "Select Committee" which, having investigated this matter, put the saddle on the right horse, and

## A SHORTSIGHTED CABINET

condemned the Cabinet of 1854 as the real author of our misery. The crass military ignorance of that body was only equalled by their baseness in trying to shift the blame of our winter misery from their own shoulders to those of Sir Richard Airey, the ablest officer, in my opinion, who then served the Queen.

Very few Secretaries of State in my time ever seriously prepared for the possibility of our being engaged in any big war. Mr. Cardwell was indeed the first—may I not add, the last—who during peace ever attempted to do this. Sooner than incur the initial expense of doing so, they have seemingly preferred to allow England to remain hopelessly unprepared even for the effective defence of these shores, on the chance that no big war might occur “in their time.” Besides, why thus add to their budget, when the chances are fairly even that their political opponents might be in office whenever war may be so forced upon us? During peace we never have the military stores required for the mobilization of the military forces we depend upon for the defence of these Islands. In fact, the great military problems which such an Empire as ours involve are never duly considered, much less provided for. When war is thrust upon us, as it was recently in South Africa, the nation suddenly discovers that we do not possess the amount of guns, ammunition, saddles, harness, wagons, etc., etc., required to place our army in the field. We can’t make them quickly enough ourselves, and owing to the hostile action of foreign Governments we are not allowed to purchase them abroad, as we recently found to our cost. When anything goes wrong at the opening of a campaign—and things must, under present arrangements, always go wrong with us in any serious war—the cunning politician tries to turn the wrath of a deceived people upon



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the military authorities, and those who are exclusively to blame are too often allowed to sneak off unhurt in the turmoil of execration they have raised against the soldiers, who, though in office, are never in power.

And so it will always be, until poor deluded John Bull insists upon a certificate being annually laid before Parliament by the non-political Commander-in-Chief that the whole of the military forces of the Empire can be completely and effectively equipped for war in a fortnight ; or should he be unable conscientiously to sign such a certificate, he should be obliged to specify all our military deficiencies. Who is it that objects to this necessary precaution against disaster ? Not, certainly, the Commander-in-Chief ; nor any other soldier at the War Office. If this were made law the people would insist upon our mobilization arrangements being complete at all times, and that the arms and stores required to place in the field all our military Forces were in our magazines and ready for issue. But there would never then be any such deficiencies, for England would insist upon having them made good as soon as they were thus reported to Parliament. Alas, alas, poor England ! some day or other she will have to pay heavily and seriously for her folly in this respect.

Upon my return home after a short spell of leave I rejoined my battalion at Aldershot. I had served in the Crimea under the general officer who was our new Brigadier, and he now often used me as his "galloper." The dear old fellow was incapable of teaching us, for strategy was to him a sealed book, and of tactics he knew as little as I did about "the theory of original sin." But it was then by no means an uncommon practice with our general officers to lean upon some member of their staff and to be guided by him in

## REJOIN THE 90TH LIGHT INFANTRY

their field operations. How could this be otherwise when the greatest fool who had enough money to purchase promotion had then only to live long enough to enable him to reach the top of the colonels' list and be certain of promotion to general's rank! Some seven or eight years later I knew a nice amiable little idiot, who having thus become a major-general was "selected"—God save the mark—for an important command abroad. Before starting for it he said to a group of old soldier-friends: "I know what my luck will be there. I shall come in for some infernal military complications, and of course I shall make a mess of the whole business." He said he knew he was a fool, but had provided himself with a very clever aide-de-camp upon whom he would lean. That was, I believe, the wisest determination he ever arrived at. All his prognostications turned out realities, but he preserved his good manners and his very cheerful demeanour throughout all his professional trials and failures.

Aldershot was a strange place in those days, and I can conscientiously assert that I never learnt anything there, nor heard of any regimental officer who did. There was no one there who was capable of teaching us. The great Prince Consort, through whose foresight and influence we had obtained our first rifled musket that served us so well in the Crimea and in the Indian Mutiny, had created Aldershot in the hope that it would help all ranks to learn the practical duties of soldiers in the field. It was one of his many laudable ambitions to improve our out of date Army and to make it thoroughly efficient. The idea was a grand one, and if the Army had never had any other good reason to revere his memory the creation of that camp of instruction should render it dear to us. But the manner in which the camp was worked, and the military ignorance of most of those who

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

were then our instructors there, prevented it from fulfilling the objects for which the Prince Consort had designed it. It was a long time before it became a useful school for military instruction. Sir Hope Grant—a real soldier, a real leader of men, and one who thoroughly understood war—was the first general in command there of any note. He knew what to teach, but he lacked one essential quality ; he had great difficulty in imparting instruction to others. I have known many men employed there as Brigadiers who were from every point of view absolutely useless.

The camp was then a somewhat rowdy place. A considerable number of officers went to town every afternoon to amuse themselves there, getting back by an early train next morning that enabled them to be in time for parade. Several of the battalions there had been in the Light Division with us in the Crimea, so there was a considerable amount of mutual entertaining.

Late hours were kept, and the evenings at our mess often ended in an attack upon the quarters of one or other of four lately joined subalterns who had practically no pretensions to the rank of gentlemen. They had been foisted upon us from the Militia during the war, as any Militia officer who could then induce a certain number of his men to volunteer for the Line was given a commission. These could be easily obtained upon payment. These four Ensigns were absolutely useless as officers, and we soon got rid of them. I shall not enter into particulars lest some Secretary of State for War, ambitious of popular applause, might found charges upon them, and try me by court-martial for my “ragging” schoolboy conduct when I was a young captain.

## CHAPTER XVI

### Ordered to China for War there, 1857

**H**AVING had some winter leave, I rejoined my regiment in the Anglesea Barracks, Portsea, early in February, 1857, and found every one preparing for a war with China.

Her Majesty's Government had at last fully realized that our relations with that Empire could not, with due respect to our national dignity, be allowed to continue on the footing which her rulers were alone willing to accord us.

We had many outstanding grievances to settle, and until they were fully redressed our mercantile relations with China would be unsatisfactory. Our position at Hong Kong and Shanghai, on the other confines of the Celestial Empire, was extremely unsatisfactory, and very undignified. Diplomacy had completely failed to obtain from the Peking Government any practical recognition of our national equality with it, and we were still regarded by the Chinese nation generally as mere barbarian traders on sufferance. This was not a pleasant position for the proud sons of Britain!

Many of our ablest consuls, who knew China best, said openly there was no way out of the difficulty except by war. Nearly twenty years' experience had taught them that the terms of peace we had exacted after our war with China of 1840-2, had in no way brought home to its people the conviction that we had defeated them. It was now indeed evident,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

not only to our merchants on the spot but to all our officials, that we should never be regarded as equals by the people of China generally until we either went to Peking as conquerors, or were officially received there with the highest honours as an important and civilized power, as great in all ways as themselves.

Our policy with China had long been essentially Chinese in character. In a figurative fashion we had always attempted to frighten the Peking Government into compliance with our demands by threats which corresponded in many ways with the hideous masks and senseless flags with which the Chinese imagined they could frighten us during war.

To us soldiers, the general position at the moment partook much of the pantomime transformation scene from the serious tragedy we had recently been engaged in before Sebastopol, to the culminating crisis of a roaring farce before Peking for which we were now preparing behind the scenes.

At that period Lord Elgin, who was going to China as our special Ambassador, seems to have been regarded as a sort of "general utility man," who could with equal advantage to the State be sent to any colony that was in difficulties, or to settle any dispute with a foreign nation.

Our Ministers wisely determined to strengthen Lord Elgin's hands by largely increasing our Navy in Chinese waters and by the dispatch to Hong Kong of several battalions of the Line. They recognized that, especially in the East, it is the strong who gain diplomatic as well as military victories. Of the battalions selected for this service mine, the 90th Light Infantry, was one.

It was with great joy that I prepared to embark for active service in China at an early date. Many of us found amusement in comparing the enemy we expected to meet there with

## UNDER ORDERS FOR CHINA

the splendid soldiers of Russia whom we had come to respect highly in the Crimea. From books upon its "Flowery Land," we gathered geographical information as to its great rivers, teeming and intelligent people, highly cultivated fields and its strange form of Government. What a contrast our life there would present in all its phases with the time we had passed upon the bleak rocky plateau before Russia's great Black-Sea fortress !

Our whole battalion was composed of young men full of life and spirit, and impressed with the one idea that the world was specially created for their own wild pleasures, of which, to most of us, war with all its sudden changes, and at times its maddening excitement, was the greatest.

A campaign in this quaint Eastern Empire, after a lengthened and dreary siege, had much that was promising for the young soldier. So lately come from the deadly batteries round Sebastopol, how great would be the change from the long war against a first-class military Power to a short campaign against a nation whose soldiers were still extensively armed with pikes and cross-bows, and who still believed in the efficacy of hideous masks and stinkpots ! Poor Chinaman, we laughed as we thought of the danger he was, in his ignorance, about to face.

Whilst we were waiting for our troopships, we saw much of the naval lieutenants then fitting out gunboats for service in the China seas. As well as I remember, those boats were known as "forties," "sixties" and "eighties" according to their steam horse-power. None of them were bigger than good-sized yachts, and as they could only carry coals enough for a few days' steaming, they were to make their way round the Cape of Good Hope under sail. It seemed a perilous undertaking to us landsmen ; but what is it that our naval

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

officers ever consider perilous ? Indeed, at this time, every young lieutenant was working heaven and earth to get command of these cockleshell craft. We had come to know many of them in the Crimea, and they often dined with us in barracks at Portsmouth. One, whom I shall call Robinson, had won for himself the prefix of "gallows Robinson" through his recklessness of danger and dare-devil exploits. Sitting next me one evening I asked him how he meant to carry his one six-inch shell gun in his small craft, and what he meant to do if any of his men fell ill. His gun was, he said, to go in the hold as ballast until he reached Hong Kong, and as for a doctor, he declared that he had that morning, when inspecting his crew, told them there was a fine medicine chest below, it was open, and they could all help themselves. With that announcement he flung the key of the chest overboard. All these gunboats reached their destination safely, and most of them took part in Admiral Sir James Hope's daring though unfortunate attack upon the Pei-Ho Forts in 1859, when our Minister, Mr. Bruce endeavoured to reach Peking by that route. That attack was doomed to failure, and the attempt to take the Chinese works by landing the sailors and marines in the deep mud that surrounded them was a mad act.

It was at last decided that our headquarters and seven companies were to embark in H.M. Troopship *Himalaya* under Colonel Campbell, C.B., and the remaining three service companies under Major Barnston<sup>1</sup> in H.M. Troopship *Transit*. Of these three companies mine was one, and the following narrative of events refers to the fortunes of this three-company detachment exclusively.

The strength of my company was over one hundred rank and file. We had lost so heavily in the Crimea that most of

<sup>1</sup> Both these excellent officers were killed before Lucknow.

## EMBARK FOR CHINA

our non-commissioned officers were very young, so much so that my colour-sergeant had to be obtained from another regiment. He was a fine looking fellow, but I never took to him, and as I shall tell later on, having found that he did not like being shot at, I got rid of him after our relief of Lucknow.

The *Transit* lot were to embark first, and we had a busy time buying an outfit, not only for the expected campaign in China, but for a station life in India afterwards. Young men under orders to leave home for India are seldom careful of their money, and I cannot say that I was any exception to the rule.

We embarked at Portsmouth on April 8, 1857, a fine clear day with sunshine, but as it was late before we got under way we could not clear the Needles before dark : the captain therefore resolved to anchor for the night in the Solent.

Besides our three companies, we had on board drafts for a regiment that had long been in Hong Kong, and a considerable number of the Army Medical Corps with several doctors and paymasters. The total number of troops on board was between six and seven hundred of all ranks. The commanding officer was Lieutenant-Colonel Stevenson, a young captain and lieutenant-colonel in the Scots Guards—then called the Fusilier Guards—who was going out to be assistant adjutant-general for the war in China. He is now General Sir Frederick Stevenson, G.C.B., and Constable of the Tower. A more devoted or gallant soldier, a more perfect gentleman, an abler commanding officer or a better fellow never breathed. I made his acquaintance the day we embarked, and I have had the privilege to call him a friend ever since. I hoped that I might also be selected for staff work when I reached Hong Kong, as the general under whom I had served on the staff in the Crimea, Lord William Paulett, told me he had



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

recommended me for staff work to General Ashburton, then commanding in China, and desired me to call upon that officer as soon as I should reach China.

Early next morning, a little after daybreak, I was roused by my servant, who coming into my cabin said in his excited Irish accent, "Get up, sor, shure the ship's going down." I told him to go away somewhat rudely, but he came back quickly and repeated the statement, adding that the ship was already half full of water. I shared the cabin with one of my oldest and best friends, Captain Irby, who commanded another company in our battalion; his servant soon came in with the same story. The regimental call and assembly made us both tumble out quickly from our berths, pull on our clothes and run on deck to our respective rendezvous. I soon found the story was true. Steam being up and the anchor weighed, all hands were soon hard at work with the pumps, whilst the steam pumps shot the water out in tons over her sides, as we made for Spithead flying signals of distress. We had anchored at high water too near the Isle of Wight, and when the tide went out, the unfortunate ship had sat down quietly upon her anchor, its fluke piercing her bottom. This was not discovered until the following morning, when we had been for some time heaving-in our cable to resume our voyage.

It was imperatively necessary for us to get into Portsmouth Harbour with the least possible delay in order to get lashed alongside a quay, where, without moving, our steam pumps could be kept going at full speed. This fastening of the ship to the shore was essential, for by an ingenious contrivance of the man who planned this ill-fated ship, those pumps could only be kept going at their quickest when the screw also was revolving at full speed. But here intervened a serious naval

## THE UNLUCKY "TRANSIT"

difficulty which amused us soldiers very much at the time. By Admiralty regulations—and they were imperative—no ship was allowed to enter Portsmouth Harbour until she had discharged her gunpowder. We had a large quantity of it on board intended for the fleet and for our siege train in China. When we reached Spithead the ship was already so low in the water that all the powder magazines had been long submerged. But the captain did not dare to disobey the letter of those regulations although their object had already been secured, for the wet powder could no longer be of any danger to the dockyard. Whilst our position was being slowly spelt-out in flag signals to the admiral ashore, the captain was obliged to keep his ship going round in a circle at full speed at Spithead, for, as already said, it was only by doing so he could keep his steam pumps going to prevent the ship from sinking. At last, permission was signalled that our water-logged old hulk might enter the harbour. There we were soon tightly lashed alongside a wharf. When we left her she was in the ridiculous position of steaming ahead full power without moving an inch. All the troops were sent to Her Majesty's ship the old *Bellerophon*, or *Belly-ruffin* as Jack-tar called her, then a hulk in the harbour.

The ship was docked and the damage repaired in a few days. The injured powder and stores were replaced, and we again started for China. She had always been an ill-fated ship. When she had taken the Houses of Parliament to the great Naval Review held the preceding year at the end of the Crimean War, she had broken down hopelessly during the operation. I believe she was obliged to have new machinery put into her in consequence.

Nothing daunted by our first "false start" we tried again, and were soon in very bad weather in the Channel. It blew

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

hard, and everything that could go wrong in her did so, and everybody was thoroughly uncomfortable on board. I have always pitied our rank and file when at sea, especially when on board a Royal Navy ship, which is to the British private the acme of discomfort. He is a much happier man on board a hired transport, for in the latter every one is kind to him.

The *Transit* was a wretched sea vessel ; she rolled heavily and " made bad weather of it " in the rough sea we encountered in the Channel. But what was still worse, she was so badly rigged that her shrouds soon began to flop loosely about the masts on the side she alternately heeled over towards in her long rolls. The consequence was, that the masts wobbled about pretty freely, and it looked at one time as if they must have gone overboard. Lashings were passed round the shrouds of each mast at some distance below the " tops," and by thus drawing them into the mast, the portion below these lashings became sufficiently tight to keep the mast in position. But this was only a temporary relief, and the captain at last resolved to run in for Corunna, the nearest port, for the purpose of refitting there.

We were all glad to get into harbour once more. What a relief after the intolerable discomfort we had undergone for the three previous days. We already began to realize that H.M.S. *Transit* was an unlucky craft indeed. Corunna in bad April weather is not an enticing seaside resort. But I was delighted to have the chance of visiting the scene of Sir John Moore's death—his last and well fought battle. He has always been to me one of our greatest heroes as well as one of our very ablest generals ; a man who thoroughly understood the theory of war and knew well how to apply it in practice.

## CORUNNA

As soon as I landed I hastened to the position where Moore gave battle to the pursuing French army. What a crowd of thoughts, recollections and aspirations passed through my brain when I stood upon the very spot where, forty-eight years before, in the cold month of January, that great soldier had fallen in the hour of victory.

The position did not strike me as a strong one for an army so small as his was, though it was the best to be found there.

As I stood where this great commander fell and thought of his deathless reputation, my brain, my whole being was stirred more than ever with the boyish wish that I too might end my days upon some well fought field of battle. What a privilege so to die for England ! " You know that I always wished to die this way " were amongst the last words Moore ever uttered.

The day I was at Corunna the weather was cold and dull, moist and sunless, but not so cold as when the battle was fought. Dark grey clouds were moving quickly through a heavily-laden Biscayan atmosphere when I reached the rampart of the citadel where the men who trusted and believed in their beloved leader had buried him by night. They left " him alone in his glory," but the English Ministers, the paid guardians of our national honour, left his grave to become a ruin. It was painful to find his last resting-place thus neglected by the nation for whose honour and reputation he had died. I felt how differently the ancients would have testified their admiration for such a national hero who gave all he had to give, his life, to an ungrateful country.

As I paused by this soldier's grave, I realized that no neglect by Ministers could rob such a man of his fame nor dull his glory. Although the remains of his political detractors may lie in " dull cold marble," who even remembers their

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

names ? Who cares for the memory of Mr. Frere, whose advice he so wisely refused to follow, whilst the name and the fame of the hero whose bones lie in that neglected grave on the Corunna ramparts will live for ever as a glorious asset in the treasure-house of our national glory. All honour to the noble-minded Spanish general who showed his respect for Moore's memory by erecting a tomb over his grave.

A close professional examination of this campaign and of Moore's character and ability have often made me ask myself, if he had lived to return home in health and strength should we ever have heard of Wellington, greater and abler though he was in all respects than the hero who lies buried at Corunna ?

Major Barnston and I had between us purchased Jomini's *History of Napoleon* and many other military works on war before starting, and we both studied them hard in our respective cabins. But as long voyages bear a strong resemblance one to another I shall not attempt to describe ours in the ill-fated *Transit*. We coaled at St. Vincent, where we found the *Himalaya* similarly employed. I went on board of her to see my brother officers and to compare notes on the events of the voyage. She was then being warped-in from where she had at first anchored to a buoy nearer shore for greater convenience in coaling. As I walked the quarter deck with a friend, the hawser employed in this operation parted, and she began at once to drift towards the shore. The captain, who was on deck, sang out to let go some particular anchor, and it was done at once with true man-of-war rapidity. But if ever there was a striking illustration of the proverb, "*l'homme propose, mais Dieu dispose*" this was one, for the anchor instead of going to the bottom fell into an iron coal barge then fastened alongside. No other anchor was ready, and

## SIMON'S TOWN

the ship began to drift broadside-on towards the shore. It was an ugly moment, and one said inwardly, "What next?" Providentially, there was a brig at anchor between us and the land, and it was evident we must strike her before our ship could be on shore. This must have occurred to Captain Chambers, of the *Transit*, whose gig was alongside, for he was quickly on board the doomed brig, and with his boat's crew succeeded in checking the *Himalaya* as she collided with the brig by slowly paying-out that little craft's cable, until at last she foundered. Sufficient time was thus, however, gained to enable the *Himalaya* to "make sail" before she sank the brig. It was a touch and go escape, for as the *Himalaya* stood slowly outwards from the harbour under sail—she had no steam up—we were not over a stone's throw from the shore.

We put into Simon's Town, where we stayed a few days, and I had one or two pretty rides in the neighbourhood of Cape Town on fairly good hired horses, and my "stable companion" on board—the best of comrades—went out daily with his gun over the rough, wild land near Simon's Town. He was a very good naturalist—and may he live long to be so still—and was always in search of strange birds and animals. A few days after we had left the Cape, I remarked a horrible smell in our cabin, and upon sniffing about, I found it came from the skin of a wild cat carefully pinned upon a board to dry. In my anger I threw it overboard. No allusion was ever made to it, but our relations were somewhat strained for a few days. He was, however, too good a fellow to bear ill-will.

Just as we were leaving the Cape a strange rumour was in the air, though no one could say whence it came nor by whom it was first put about. It was, that the native army of India

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

had mutinied. I was the only man on board who had ever been in India, and I distinctly recall the fact of having been appealed to in consequence as an authority on the subject, and asked if I believed it. My service in India had been short, but short as it was I had often heard old Indians scout the possibility of Mohammedans and Hindoos ever combining to make common cause against their Christian rulers. My answer was consequently in harmony with this belief.

After leaving the Cape, we followed the usual sailing ship's course, making due east towards the uninhabited little island of Amsterdam. The weather was stormy in those low latitudes, and the seas were high, until at last we ran into or were overtaken by a cyclone. It is commonly supposed that most if not all the East Indiamen that have been lost eastward of the Cape have gone down in these terrific "circular storms," and we very nearly did so. Our mainyard snapped in two, and sails after sails, as they were set, were rent in pieces. We had already an unsafe amount of water in the hold, and it began to be whispered that we had sprung a leak. This soon became an ascertained fact, and it was discovered there was a rent over twenty feet long in the iron plates of the ship below watermark. Every pump was kept going, and had the gale lasted much longer we should never have been heard of again, for during the twenty-four hours we had pumped out some five hundred tons of water from the hold.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A naval officer who was then on board this wretched ship wrote to me in recent years to say that it was, under Providence, the engine-room pumps which saved the ship from foundering in mid-ocean. That had we not been wrecked at Banca, any attempt to have taken her across the sea from Singapore to Hong Kong would have been reckless, as "the iron plates were hourly getting looser and looser." He added that when the captain made his periodical inspections of the engine-room, "he repeatedly requested that the sinking condition of the ship might not be told to any of the military

## SMOOTH WATER IN THE TROPICS

But in the midst of all this danger we had some fun. There was a doctor of high medical rank on board whose nerves had given way amongst the many trials this unseaworthy ship exposed us to. The cyclone was too much for him. But he met with no sympathy from us light-hearted young men. We took pleasure in carrying on conversations within his hearing describing how the leak had spread to thirty feet in length, and that each time the vessel rolled one could peer into the green sea through the yawning aperture. It was amusing to us but unfeelingly cruel to the poor nervous doctor. I feel ashamed as I think of our behaviour towards him.

The weather brightened as we entered the Tropics, and as we stood north towards the Strait of Sunda between Java and Sumatra, the sea became as smooth as the proverbial millpond.

officers ; the iron plates of the ship in the wake of the masts were working quite loose, and rivets all but useless, the sea rushing in in vast quantities."



## CHAPTER XVII

### Shipwrecked in Straits of Banca—News that Bengal Army had Mutinied—Arrive in Calcutta, 1857

THE naval officers of the ship told us their charts of the seas and islands lying between the Straits of Sunda and Singapore were inexact and bad. We passed through the Strait July 9, 1857, and the captain decided to proceed through the Straits of Banca, between the island of that name to the east and Sumatra to the west. The straits to the east of Banca, named Gaspar, were badly laid down on the charts, and were studded with rocks, each bearing the name of the ship that had foundered upon it. After breakfast I went on deck and found we had entered the Straits of Banca. It was a lovely still day, not a ripple disturbed the mirror-like surface of the sea. I was lighting my cigar from that of a brother officer when I was shot forward upon him by the ship having suddenly stopped dead. The masts shook as if they would go overboard. The *Transit* had struck a rock, and in an instant had become absolutely stationary.

The bugles sounded our regimental call, and we all ran down to our men who were still below cleaning-up after their breakfast. All the troops were carried on the main deck, except one company, which was on the deck below it and

## SHIPWRECKED IN STRAITS OF BANCA

situated well forward. It was a horrible quarter below the water level, and lit only by one solitary candle lanthorne. Each company took it for a week in turn, and it was my company's luck to be the unfortunate occupants when the ship struck. Upon reaching that dreadful lower region I fell the men in, half on one side, the other half on the opposite side of the deck. I told them there was no danger—an allowable fib which I hope the recording angel did not enter upon my "defaulter sheet," adding that no man upon any account was to open his lips unless I spoke to him.

There we stood in deadly silence, and I know not for how long. The abominable candle in the lanthorne sputtered and went out. We were in almost absolute darkness, our only glimmer of light coming down through a very small hatchway which was reached by a narrow ladder. The ship began to sink by the stern, so it was evident to all thinking minds that we hung on a rock somewhere forward. The angle of our deck with the sea level above us became gradually greater, until at last we all had to hold on to the sides of our dark submarine prison. I remember my own sensations then as well as I do what occurred to me yesterday. My predominant feeling was of horrid repugnance at the possibility, which at last became the probability, of being drowned in the dark, like a rat in a trap. I should have liked to have had a swim for my life at the last, the supreme moment, but that would be impossible if the abominable ship should slip off the rock.

"If Greece must perish, I Thy will obey,  
But let me perish in the face of day."

The only aperture even to the main deck, as I have already described, was very small, and most eyes were

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

kept riveted upon it. I am sure that every man now alive who was there must shudder as he thinks of what seemed to all of us the interminable time we were in that pit. Every minute seemed an hour, but at last a face appeared at the aperture ordering us on deck. What a relief to us to be once more in the open air with a clear blue sky overhead, even though the ship moaned and creaked ominously, as if to warn us that she must soon break her back and disappear for ever into those depths known only to sharks and mermaids.

Very fortunately for us, there was about three-quarters of a mile from where the ship struck a long, low coral reef, which rose in the centre to a height of some fifteen feet above its general level. With a man-of-war's crew and plenty of soldiers to help, every boat in the ship was soon afloat, well provided with water and provisions, and all laden with soldiers bound for this reef. How differently affairs would have gone for us had we been in a mere merchant vessel hired for the occasion as a transport.

What a boon to man is discipline! If I could afford it, I would erect a monument to that most admirable of soldierly virtues. It is based on faith, for without faith in your superiors all discipline is but as an apple of the Dead Sea in the mouth: it is only an outward form filled with dust.

Everything connected with our landing went like clock-work, and although our unlucky captain was never given another ship, those who saw him that day, from the moment the *Transit* struck until every man was safely out of her, felt the greatest respect for his cool courage and his calm unruffled behaviour throughout. He gave his orders clearly and deliberately as if it were an ordinary shipwreck

## OUR TIMID DOCTOR

practice parade. Few of us had ever spoken to him during the voyage, and as none of us knew him, we never troubled ourselves about him and cared nothing for him. He was to us an instrument whose business it was to get us to China, just as it was that of the steam engine on board to work us there. But when we saw how he acted in an emergency, which—coming after his previous mishap in the Solent—must be his professional funeral, we could not help admiring and pitying him.

I have always been a superstitious believer in luck, and the end of the *Transit* and of those connected with her went far to strengthen in me that illogical faith. She had always been an ill-starred ship. As we pulled away from her sinking wreck we were glad to think that the Admiralty could never again send troops in that wretched craft.

We were soon safely huddled together—one thousand men in all—upon this coral reef, which was only about three degrees south of the Equator. The heat was intense, for there was no wind, and the sun streamed upon us with a skull-piercing ferocity through our regimental forage caps. The sailors, however, did not seem to mind it, and worked all day with untiring energy with less protection for their heads. They set us a good example of uncomplaining endurance under trying circumstances.

In the midst of our hard work that day, so willingly undertaken by all ranks, I must not forget an incident that even at such a moment afforded us much amusement. I have already mentioned an old nervous medical officer as a passenger, and this day must have been to him one of superlative misery. He left the ship in the first boat that carried any soldiers to the reef I have mentioned.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

It was about an acre in extent, and there he ensconced himself for some time. It presented a flat coral surface, with a little rising ground in the centre. When he had landed the tide was low, though flowing, but in a short time it began to overflow the flat surface of the reef. This was somewhat alarming, so he once more shifted his position to the higher ground. But the tide began to invade this also, and every quarter of an hour it came nearer and nearer to his feet. The imminent danger of drowning, and of being torn by sharks, began to affect him, but what could be done? Where could he find safety? A brilliant idea apparently struck him; why not get into and stay in one of the boats then engaged in plying between the reef and the wreck with stores and provisions? No sooner thought of than done, and into the stern sheets of a boat he conveyed that body to which he alone amongst us attached any value. But leave that position he would not and did not until, night coming on, all boats repaired to the island of Banca, some two miles distant. He saved his life, and in doing so afforded us all much amusement, and we wanted something to amuse us at the moment. I do not know what became of him after we had started for Singapore, but I hope it may not be my bad luck to be associated with him in any moment of danger or hour of trial in the next world.

Before I reached the island in the evening it was found that we had landed close by a nice little stream of good fresh water. I was at once set to work to construct a dam across it to prevent the sea running up at high tide, and this I did successfully. We set all hands to work at making temporary shelters for our men; they were easily and quickly constructed, as the jungle afforded

## THE ISLAND OF BANCA

ample materials. For the first two days most of us lived chiefly on pineapples, of which there were quantities near the beach. No animals but monkeys were to be seen, and at first no traces of man to be found anywhere. Many tried boiled monkey in the hodge-podge of salt pork, salt beef and beans we stewed all day for dinner. As we partook of this horrible mixture each of us persuaded himself that he was eating the salt-junk whilst his neighbour fed the baboon.

The jungle came down to the edge of the sea beach along the coast where we had landed, and we soon found little paths through it which were duly explored. One or two houses built on piles, after the fashion of the locality, were discovered, and at last a few inhabitants were encountered. Beyond some cocks and hens nothing was to be obtained from them.

How beautiful it looked, how refreshing and reposeful to the eyes of those lately out from the stormy, angry seas of latitude  $38^{\circ}$  south. Gutta-percha trees of great size abounded, and amongst their branches swarms of big monkeys disported themselves, grinning at the northern barbarians who had invaded their territory. Great numbers of parrots, of all sizes and of every bright hue, eyed us cunningly from every point of vantage, making us realize that we had not been cast upon an absolutely desert island. We afterwards discovered that where we landed was the spot upon which a British force had disembarked in 1811, though we could find no traces of their having done so. The little stream of water may, however, have been the reason why it was selected for the purpose.

Very soon after the *Transit* had foundered, a boat had been dispatched to Minto, the chief town of the island,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

for assistance, and a Dutch gunboat accordingly made its appearance next morning to protect us and our wreck. The Dutch authorities at Minto also sent a gunboat to communicate the news of our disaster to the authorities at Singapore.

As long as we remained on the island we kept our men at work improving their bivouac, and the sailors brought us sails from the wreck which made comfortable tents. I was much better off than most of us, for when going over the side of the *Transit* after my company had got into the boats, my curious and amusing Irish servant came to me and said with a sort of wink, "Never mind me, sor, I will stay and try to bring you off some of your things." When he rejoined me on shore he handed to me eighty odd sovereigns, a couple of watches and some trinkets he knew were in an old dressing case that had belonged to my father, and, what was even more valuable, he had emptied his knapsack of all his own things, and had filled it with my flannel shirts, towels, pocket handkerchiefs, etc. I think, my readers, you will admit that our rank and file, not pertinently but impertinently styled "tommies," are really the best fellows in the world! At least I know them to be so, and all my young days when I lived amongst them in the field I had good reason for my belief in them, not only as soldiers of the Queen but as personal friends of my own. The next day a sailor brought me a blue dressing-gown I had used on board the *Transit*. He had found it floating about in the ship. It was subsequently one of the very few articles that formed my kit when I crossed the Ganges by the bridge of boats at Cawnpore on the following October 21, *en route* for the Alum Bagh, near Lucknow.

## MUTINY OF BENGAL ARMY

After a busy stay of some ten days on the Island of Banca, the *Dove* gunboat arrived from Singapore to look after our welfare. Her arrival was a memorable event in my life, for she brought the astounding news—confirming the mysterious rumour we had heard at Capetown—that the Bengal sepoy had mutinied, had murdered their officers and restored the Mahommedan rule at Delhi. The great Mogul, who had been so long a sort of *Roi-fainéant* in our hands, had been proclaimed as sovereign ruler of all Hindostan. I can remember no event that ever gave Englishmen at home and abroad so great a national shock. The Hindoo considered the Mussulman to be as unclean a creature as his own white master, and the “true believer in one God” only, despised the Brahmin as an idolater. That the men of two such very antagonistic religions should have combined and made common cause against British rule seemed incomprehensible. Yet so it was. We had long pampered this Bengal sepoy, as Sir Charles Napier bluntly told the gentlemen who ruled India from Threadneedle Street. But his warnings had served no useful purpose. They only brought down upon him the bitter enmity of the Quoi-Hai community both in England and in India.

We also learnt from the *Dove* the joyful intelligence that the destination of the 90th Light Infantry had been diverted from China to Calcutta. That was indeed good news for all of us.

In due course, H.M.S. *Actæon* arrived. She was a sailing vessel employed on surveying duties, and had men of science on board. It was a luxury to be once more in comfortable quarters in the cleanest of ships. She landed us at Singapore on July 23, where I first made



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

John Chinaman's acquaintance, and found him a most interesting fellow in every way. We were put into some large huts recently erected as a small-pox hospital, where we quickly made the men fairly comfortable. Singapore was then a great commercial port and swarmed with pig-tailed men from Hong-Kong and Canton, and indeed with all sorts and conditions of Europeans and Asiatics. After a week's stay at that interesting city, our three companies embarked in H.M. ships *Pearl* and *Shannon*, my company being in the former. We started from our small-pox hospital at 4 a.m. July 30, for the quay where we were to embark. It was a distance of about a couple of miles, but it seemed a long one, for it poured as if Heaven's sluice-gates had been opened upon us. When we reached our ship we were as wet as if we had swum that distance to her. Everybody on board vied in lending us dry clothes and in making all ranks comfortable. The captain had received orders to make all possible haste in getting to Calcutta, for every white soldier that could be landed there at that moment was worth much gold.

We were all anxiety to get there and overtake our headquarters and the seven companies who had already started for it. "The more haste the worse speed" was fully borne out in our case, for every sort of trouble seemed to be in store for us. We began by losing a man overboard, then another who belonged to the party that tried to lower a boat to his assistance. We "knocked about" for three days in the neighbourhood of the "Sand Heads," before we could obtain a pilot to take us up the difficult passage of the Hooghly River. At last we found one, and reached our destination in safety, but too late to catch our headquarters: they had already started up the river

## ARRIVE IN CALCUTTA

in boats towed by steamers. We anchored off a big ghat, or landing place, off the native city, amidst a vast crowd of native boats laden with fish, fruit and vegetables for sale. Our captain fired twenty-one guns as a salute to the Union Jack flying over the grassy slopes of Fort William. It was an unusual proceeding, for men-of-war very seldom went up the Hooghley. When the first gun was fired all the boats round us were to be seen flying in every direction, many even were abandoned, the crew having jumped overboard in panic, believing it was the intention of this great sea monster to take immediate vengeance upon the native inhabitants for the atrocious murders and cruelties committed by the sepoys "up country." The vast crowds that thronged the banks to see the war vessel fled, as if for their lives, to obtain cover from the vengeful Englishmen's shot and shell with which they assumed our guns were loaded. To the soldiers on board, always prepared to laugh heartily at cowardice thus shamelessly acknowledged, this afforded great amusement.

The guns that now welcomed us—part of the first regiment that landed in India for the suppression of this dreadful Mutiny—were fired from a spot close to where one of the most tragic events in our Indian history had been enacted. What Englishman has not heard of the "Black Hole of Calcutta"? The barbarous crime there perpetrated by the fiend Surajah-Dowlah led immediately to the battle of Plassey, which, fought just a hundred years before, may be said to have inaugurated our great Indian Empire of to-day. We were told that the old Indian prophecy that our rule in Hindostan would last a century had had much to do in bringing about the great Mutiny of 1857. This may have

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

been the case, but I don't think the prophecy would have been realized had those who ruled the Bengal army been blessed with a sounder knowledge of men and known better how to govern soldiers. Under a Charles Napier as Commander-in-Chief it would not, I think, have been possible.

The condition of things in Calcutta when we arrived was not pleasant. The native troops there and in the neighbouring districts had been disarmed and knew they were suspected. Many timid ladies slept each night in Fort William, and it was said that some always carried poison about them to take in case of emergency. Others went to bed with revolvers under their pillows, and practised with them daily at a mark. In these days of peace it is not easy to realize fully the fears experienced then by our countrywomen in India. Many of those who had been up country when the first murders were committed had already reached Calcutta, and their stories of hair-breadth escapes, and of the miseries they had endured in their flight, were heartrending. The local newspapers abounded in tales of murder and of crimes that made the blood boil.

The morning after our arrival, a river steamer with a "flat" attached to it came alongside, and into this we were all transferred. Beyond our arms and accoutrements we really had no baggage, so we were quickly under way up stream for Chinsura, a station about forty miles by rail above Calcutta; I have already mentioned it in an early chapter. There we remained until the last week of August, busily engaged in re-clothing our men, and in serving out new arms, those we had brought from home having been damaged by salt water during the wreck. Everything

## SIR COLIN CAMPBELL ARRIVES

was new to all ranks. We had not a native servant amongst us, and none could speak Hindostanee. But we were all young and lighthearted, and what does youth care for difficulties ?

From the upper provinces there came daily news of more regiments having mutinied and killed their officers. Up to the last moment too many of those devoted Englishmen had stoutly refused to believe their men meant mischief. It was to this noble quality of absolute faith in the loyalty of their men that most of these brutal murders were attributable.

The stories our men heard daily of the barbarities practised by the mutineers upon women and children, especially of those that had taken place at Cawnpore, inflamed their minds to a degree it is now difficult to realize. I can speak from experience as to my own company during its long march of over 500 miles, from Raneegunj to Cawnpore. During the night they often caught armed patrols of our native police, and when I released them, explaining who they were, I many times heard my men grumble because "the captain had let off another lot of those d—d niggers."

Sir Colin Campbell reached Calcutta about the middle of August, 1857, when the outlook in India was extremely gloomy. The Bengal sepoy had been long pampered by his officers. Some years previously, Sir Charles Napier had proposed to disband the worst of them, and to bring up all ranks of the remainder "with a round turn." But he was hounded down by the Indian Government as a sort of incapable madman. He was, however, a great soldier and knew well what he was about, whilst they were blinded and either would not or could not see the condition into

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

which the Bengal army had fallen. They pooh-poohed the assertion that it had lost its old fighting qualities and had become discontented. An officer who was on the staff during one of our Sikh wars told me not long after the event, that during one of their hard fought battles in the Punjaub, the colonel of a sepoy regiment came to his general and in whining tones said, "My regiment, Sir, has been cut to pieces!" "Has cut-away you mean and be d—d to them!" was the general's reply. My informant added they all turned up when the battle was over.

Our battles in India before the Mutiny were almost all won by the British soldiers of either the Royal or the Company's service. But the despatches describing those battles were too often filled with glowing encomiums upon the valour and steadiness of the sepoy. From their perusal the ignorant might not even have gathered in some cases that any white private soldiers had been present.

Major Barnston, who had known Sir Colin in the Crimea, went to see him in Calcutta within a few days of his arrival, and met with a cordial reception. In the course of conversation upon the selection of staff officers, Sir Colin said that the East India Company had been given a long trial, and that its rulers, civil and military, were directly responsible for the Mutiny. He added that as the Indian officers had thus failed it was his intention now to give the officers of the Queen's Army a turn to see if they could not do better.

An army of Asiatic mercenaries is always a dangerous army, even though it have English officers; but it is worse when its former military spirit has deserted the rank and file, for it is then useless as well. This was to a great

## THE MILITARY POSITION

extent the condition of the regular Bengal army when it mutinied.

Few remember now how very serious was the position that Sir Colin had to face when he reached Calcutta. At no previous period in her history had India—I use the word as a geographical designation of our Eastern Empire—been so deeply, so generally excited. From Peshawur to Cape Comorin all classes in Hindostan, from the royal rulers in Delhi, to the humblest ryot who tilled the paddy fields of Bengal, all felt the shock of this Mutiny. How merciful the Great Ruler of all worlds was to us as a nation in postponing this dire calamity until we had finished our war with Russia. Without doubt, as a nation possessing great fighting instincts, we should have manfully faced the double misfortune, but it must have very seriously strained our resources.

To dwell upon what I conceive to have been the causes which, extending over about twenty years, led, little by little, to the military revolt, would be beyond the scope of these memoirs. I content myself with saying that I thought in 1857, and think so still, that the Mutiny was the direct outcome of the foolish mode in which the Bengal sepoy had been over-indulged by the Indian military authorities.

In August, 1857, the Doab, Rohilkund and the North-West Provinces generally were practically in the hands of the mutinous native soldiers. Meerut and the forts of Allahabad and Agra were still ours, and Cawnpore was held by the handful of British “lame ducks” whom Outram and Havelock had left there when they marched for Lucknow. Except that last-named city, and the little post at the Alum Bagh near it, both held by insufficient

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

garrisons, all Oudh was occupied by the enemy, and its warlike inhabitants were in arms against us. The Gwalior contingent had not yet revolted, but rebellion had spread over the greater portion of Central India.

Our power in the Bengal Presidency had so dwindled away that in order to communicate with Delhi Sir Colin Campbell, whilst at Calcutta, had to send his orders round by Bombay, whence they passed up the Indus into the Punjaub, and thence to the Mogul capital.

The sepoy troops who had mutinied at Dinapore had for some time blocked the Grand Trunk Road between Allahabad and Calcutta. But my battalion and the Northumberland Fusiliers, on their way to Cawnpore, had already cleared away that obstruction. However, as long as we could continue to hold Allahabad and Cawnpore on the Ganges, we possessed two good bases from which to operate against Oudh. The former was, for India, a strong fortress, and could be reached by steamer from Calcutta in from twenty to thirty days. By road it was only about 500 miles from Calcutta, of which 112 miles, as far as Raneegunj, could be done by rail.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### Forced March from Chinsura to Cawnpore

1857

THE great Mutiny of the Bengal native army in 1857 took the English world by surprise. We had no serious warning that any such terrible trial, with its attendant horrors and misfortunes, was in store for us.

My readers should remember that the Mutiny of 1857 was by no means the first we had had in India. Only half a century before two native battalions at Vellore, near Madras, had mutinied and murdered their officers, a detachment of white soldiers, and a number of the India Company's civil servants. Fortunately an excellent officer, Colonel Gillespie, of the King's 19th Dragoons, was at hand, who attacked the mutineers and killed some 800 of them. Other mutinies had been arranged to take place that same day, but the sepoy regiments concerned were disarmed in good time.

In 1824 a regiment of Bengal native infantry refused to go to Burmah. When ordered to "ground arms" on parade, in consequence of their refusal to embark, they took no notice of the order. General Sir Edward Paget, then present, was however equal to the occasion. He opened fire upon them with canister, and they fled for their lives.



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Upon more recent occasions of mutiny, whenever the Commander-in-Chief in India felt it necessary to adopt serious measures, the Court of Directors in London invariably strove to pooh-pooh the necessity for them. They scoffingly described the commander on the spot as an "alarmist," and his action was generally decried at home as an evidence of his want of sympathy with the sepoy under his command. Such action on their part could not be too strongly condemned. In an army of aliens, acting in their own country in the midst of their friends and relatives, indeed of a whole population who loathed and abhorred the religion and daily habits of their officers, there must be no delay, no hesitation to nip in the bud all incipient mutiny. The hand of iron in a soft silk glove can alone keep such an army in order at any time. But the East India directors, far removed from the pulse of the native population, refused as a rule to recognize the necessity for ever letting the sepoy feel that the glove held within it an iron hand. They were never prepared to act promptly and vigorously when disaffection in any shape was shown by even a section of their native troops. We won India by the sword, and whilst humanity and a Christian spirit incites us at all times to do what we can to make the sepoy and the people generally happy, prosperous and contented, that sword must be always kept sharp and ready for use at any moment.

Whatever may have been the usually recognized theories as to the best methods for the good government of India, the directors were always very hard upon the general in India who took immediate action to nip mutiny in the bud by any strong measures. Their conduct towards Sir Charles Napier when he disbanded a regiment for

## SIR CHARLES NAPIER

mutinous conduct illustrates what I mean. They desired to hush this matter up by persuading the world that this alleged mutiny existed only in the brain of the English general, whom they feared and disliked. He was, I may say, practically recalled in consequence, being condemned as an alarmist. Fate had in store for them, however, the disagreeable necessity of being compelled by the great Duke of Wellington to accept him subsequently as the Commander-in-Chief for India. This was in 1849, when the disastrous battle of Chillianwallah seemed for the moment to have placed in jeopardy our rule over all India.

When this great Mutiny burst upon us in 1857, the force of white troops in India consisted of about 26,000 men of the Queen's cavalry and infantry regiments—no Royal Artillery then served in India—and there were some 12,000 local European artillery and infantry belonging to the East India Company. All the Company's cavalry were natives. The regular native army of India was about 200,000 strong, raised in three distinct forces, and called after the three Presidencies to which they respectively belonged. In addition to these forces there were a considerable number of Irregular Regiments of horse and foot, those belonging to the Bengal Presidency being mostly raised after the Sikh War of 1849. These Punjaub regiments consisted of fine fighting men, soldiers by instinct and by birth; Pathans, Punjaabee Mussulmans, Sikhs and even Afridees from beyond our frontiers. The officers for these regiments, carefully selected from the whole army in India, were generally the best men to be found in it, or indeed I might say in any army. These regiments of Irregulars remained strictly faithful to us throughout all the vicissitudes of the dreadful Mutiny, and no men

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

ever fought more gallantly than they did under the remarkable officers selected to lead them. Under men like Sir Dighton Probyn, Sam Brown, Hodson, Wilde, Vaughan and other famous leaders, they could be depended upon to go anywhere and attempt anything. But what soldiers, British or native, would not fight under a leader like Dighton Probyn? Of him it might indeed be said that he was a host in himself. The most modest of men, he was remarkable, even amongst brave men, for cool pluck and splendid daring at a time when the Bengal army possessed many of the most dashing leaders who ever fought for Queen Victoria.

Up to the date of Sir Colin Campbell's arrival in August, 1857, the British reinforcements had only reached Calcutta in dribblets, which were quickly used up along the line of communications by the civil commissioners of districts. He now began to collect these little detachments into battalions. But he was besieged by "officers of every rank anxious to be sent at least as divisional commanders and at the head of small columns independent of all control."<sup>1</sup> He found that the civil authorities along the one great line of communication between Calcutta and Cawnpore interfered much with the progress of his troops towards the latter city. These district commissioners were doubtless quite correct in believing that revolt was brewing around them and that it might burst into an angry reality at any moment. It was natural, therefore, that each and all of them should wish to retain some British troops in their immediate neighbourhood. But when the whole of a great country is very much in a similar condition it is

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Sir Colin Campbell to Sir Henry Lawrence of September 12, 1857.

## FORCED MARCH TO CAWNPORE

the "big soldier" alone who, taking a broad comprehensive view of the whole position, can best decide where and how he shall dispose his possibly insufficient forces to the greatest advantage.

Delhi was at this time besieged by a gallant but inadequate British force, and it could not be assaulted until the expected arrival of General Nicholson with reinforcements.

By September 2 a battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers, seven companies of my battalion of the 90th Light Infantry, together with Major Eyre's battery, making in all a force of six guns and over 1,200 bayonets, reached Allahabad to join Outram and Havelock. This column pushed forward to Cawnpore and fought their way thence into Lucknow, literally at the point of the bayonet, upon which occasion my battalion suffered considerably.<sup>1</sup>

There were few railways in India then, though some great lines had been planned. One along the right bank of the Hooghley River had been already begun that was intended eventually to connect our furthest provinces with Calcutta. As yet, however, it had only reached Raneegunj, 120 miles from Calcutta. The two great navigable rivers, the Ganges and the Indus, were the highways along which our troops annually travelled from Calcutta and from Kurachee into the interior. The headquarters of my battalion had gone up country by the former in steamers which towed big flats behind them. But that river was

<sup>1</sup> In the eight weeks between the date when the Headquarters of the 90th Light Infantry reached the Alum Bagh, until the three Companies of that Battalion under Major Barnston opened out communications with the Lucknow Residency on November 17, 1857, we lost in officers, 9 killed, 7 wounded—16 total. In the nearly forty weeks whilst employed at the Siege of Sebastopol, our loss in officers was only 4 killed, 13 wounded—17 total.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

now, late in August, already low and was still falling, making any movements of troops over it uncertain. It was therefore determined to send our three *Transit* companies by rail from Chinsura to Raneegunj, and thence by road to Benares, Allahabad and Cawnpore to join our Headquarters in Oudh.

The Grand Trunk Road over which we were to travel was a splendid work. It extended from Calcutta to Cawnpore, Lucknow, Agra, Delhi, the North-West Provinces and the Punjab. No body of troops had marched over it between Calcutta and Allahabad since the Bengal native army had mutinied, and from most of the districts through which it passed the judges and other civil officials had been driven away. We were warned of positions said to be held by the enemy upon it, and were told that we should certainly have to fight at some places, but our instructions were to reach Cawnpore at the earliest possible date. This was an unnecessary instruction, for from the Commanding Officer to our smallest Bugler, all ranks and all ages longed to push forward and get at the throats of those who had brutally murdered English women and children.

One company at a time was to move, with a day's interval between each, and to travel at night by what was then known as "Bullock Dak," at the rate of about thirty miles a night. The sun would have been trying to our men at that season, and we should never have been able to get our bullocks along during the hot hours of daylight. It was hoped we should thus reach Benares in twelve night marches. Each wagon was covered in and drawn by two little bullocks. One was allotted to every two officers and one to every six men. Of these six men, two at a time

## OUR START BY RAIL

in turn, watch about, were to be always on foot, so no wagon ever had more than four men in it at a time. One third of the company, with its proportion of officers, would thus be always on the road and ready to fight at any moment. By this system of reliefs no man would actually march on foot more than ten miles in the twenty-four hours. We were to find fresh bullocks at every ten miles—so it was said—and to halt all the day at specified staging houses, commonly known as “Dak Bungalows.”

A six-pounder gun was given over to me, for which I was to find gunners from my company.

In accordance with the orders I received, I marched my company—about 100 Rank and File—to the Chinsura railway station on the evening of August 29, 1857.

Upon reaching that station I found there was no door wide enough to allow my six-pounder to pass through to the platform. It was too late to dismount it, as the train was expected immediately. The station-master, a half-caste who spoke English, said that if I would take it down the line some three or four miles I should find a cutting where he thought I might manage to get it on a truck. This I felt to be equally out of the question, so I determined to pull down one side of the doorway that led into the station, and thus make the opening wide enough for the gun. The poor half-caste stationmaster was dumfounded. “His voice clung to his jaws” with horror at the mere suggestion, and his yellow complexion seemed to grow paler with each blow from the crowbar of my stalwart pioneer upon the doorpost. My poor railway official, finding that neither remonstrance nor warnings, almost amounting to threats, had any effect, at last contented himself with begging I would give him

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

a certificate that I had committed this crime, for such it was in his opinion. This of course I did. We parted amicably. I never heard any more about the matter afterwards, though expecting to receive a bill from the East India Company for "one railway station wantonly destroyed, etc., etc."

In due course our train reached the terminus at Raneegunj, where I found our bullock wagons and their nervous, frightened drivers awaiting our arrival. Not one of my party could speak a sentence of Hindostanee. I found, however, a half-caste apothecary waiting for us there with a box of physic in case of accidents. Although we never found it necessary to test his medical knowledge, he was very useful as an interpreter throughout the long march to Cawnpore that we began that evening. Like all his brethren, he was absolutely wanting in energy and power of decision. I don't think he took any soporific drug, but his expression always seemed to indicate that he had either been very recently asleep or was longing to sleep, or perhaps both of those conditions of mind and body together. Neither my four subalterns nor I had a native servant amongst us, so our soldier servants did for us all we required, and that was very little. We had no baggage, as all we possessed had gone down in H.M.S. *Transit*, and we had merely bought in Calcutta the small amount of clothing necessary for an out-of-door life in a tropical climate. It is curious how little suffices for that purpose, as Sir Charles Napier insisted when taking the field himself. I well remember Tenniel's cartoon in *Punch* of that distinguished general mounted on a camel, when suddenly ordered to take the command in India after our disastrous victory at Chillianwallah. His kit was represented as packed in a small

## OUR VERY SMALL KITS

bundle and described as consisting merely of a spare shirt, a towel, a piece of soap, and some few other necessary articles. He had previously asserted publicly that some such kit was ample for all campaigning purposes. Those who knew him, even by sight, thought he might have omitted the soap.

At the moment, however, none of us thought much of kits or personal comforts. We saw many things of great interest to the ordinary traveller on our road to Cawnpore. Beautiful Hindoo temples that had existed there in ages when our barbarian forebears, clad in skins, had hunted wolves on Cannock Chase. We passed mosques that had been built by the Mahometan conquerors of India many centuries before to celebrate their victories : but we had then no time or inclination to admire, much less to examine the splendid creations of former Indian rulers : we took no interest in such matters ; our work was with the mutinous sepoys who had been "unfaithful to their salt," had murdered English women and children, and for their blood we were consequently athirst. To avenge the murder of our officers was not in our thoughts. Their business was to face death in all forms, and to die like gentlemen when necessary, and the officers of our Indian army did so most nobly upon all occasions throughout this appalling Mutiny. But the remembrance of the treatment our women and children had received at the hands of these fiends roused all our worst instincts. Of what interest could be the scenery or the history of the country we marched through to soldiers who thought only of vengeance, and of their comrades then besieged in Lucknow some 700 miles away. Let us get there as quickly as possible ; we talked of nothing else. We discussed whether



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

we should be in time to join General Havelock in his intended relief of Lucknow, and never wearied of the theme.

Our daily marches averaged from twenty to thirty miles, made mostly in the dark. It was the rainy season, and those who have seen how it can rain in Bengal will understand the condition in which we frequently reached our halting places. The rivers were in flood, and crossing them by night was often no easy matter. At some we had to halt for hours before they subsided sufficiently to admit of our fording them.

The river Soane was then about two miles in width, and in it I spent the whole night, as did all my four subalterns also, often up to the neck, pushing and hauling to get our bullock carts over. All ranks worked hard, for all were equally anxious to get forward. There was a stern purpose in the countenance of the men that did not augur well for the long life of the first mutineer they met. But with all this, our night marching was somewhat trying. At times the bullocks would lie down, when no blows could induce them to get up. An old sergeant of my company taught me an infallible method for making them do it without any beating whatever. One man held the animal's tail straight out, whilst another clasped it between two walking sticks. You had only to push the sticks two or three times rather briskly up and down the tail, to make the most recalcitrant bullock walk off with his cart at a quick, lively pace and his tail straight up in the air. This rubbing up the joints of the vertebrae seemed to tickle and electrify them and make them happy for the moment : poor beasts they seemed to have but little enjoyment : let us hope this novel sensation may have relieved the monotony of their lives.

## THE RAJ-MAHALL HILLS

In one of the districts marched through, the road was patrolled at night by the men of a loyal Rajah. They wore no uniform and their arms were primitive; very inferior tulwars and old matchlocks of the preceding century. These fellows were being continually pounced upon as enemies by my men whose turn it was to form the advanced guard. Our lazy apothecary had upon these occasions to be pulled out of his cart, for like an idle Eastern he never went on foot as all the officers did in turn. After a few questions put to them by him we ascertained who they were and released them.

The Grand Trunk Road crosses the pretty range of the Raj-Mahall hills. They were thickly covered with dense forest, and I was assured that whilst the road was being made through them by gangs of convicts, we had lost at the rate of a man a day from tigers. It was a part of the road where I was told to keep a good look out in case of attack, not from tigers but from the Pandeas, as our mutineers were then commonly called.<sup>1</sup> When passing through this jungly country one night, I was marching in rear of the column, to prevent straggling, when the alarm was given from the front. As I ran forward I found the men all bundling out of their bullock carts, handling their rifles, and fixing bayonets as they did so. I inquired what the matter was, but no one knew, except that the alarm had come from the front. I saw, however, as I hurried forward, that several teams of bullocks had bolted with their carts off the road. Upon reaching my six-pounder gun, I found everything in confusion. The native bullock drivers had run away, and the long team of gun bullocks

<sup>1</sup> This nickname came from a Sepoy named Mūngal Pandee, who was said to have been a chief instigator of this Bengal Mutiny.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

had apparently tied themselves into a knot. It was a bright moonlight night. No shot had been fired and I could see no enemy. My half-awake apothecary was set to inquire from the bullock men of the gun-team what was the cause of the alarm. One of them explained that as they were quietly proceeding along the road a tiger had suddenly jumped in amongst the gun bullocks. It had evidently missed its spring, and had taken up a position under a tree not fifty yards from the road, where I saw it plainly in the clear Indian moonlight. The whole position was grotesque in the extreme. The Bengal bullock scents a tiger when in its neighbourhood, and then terror like a species of madness takes possession of it. Nothing can be done with it. Its driver, without the same keenness of nose, has a similar weakness of heart.

As the tiger stood looking at the strange spectacle, he presented a tempting shot, and I felt much inclined to try him with a rifle bullet. Some one near, evidently doubting the correctness of my aim, suggested we should fire a volley, and my pioneer, whom I had constituted master gunner during the march, pressed me to allow him to try the tiger with a round of canister from his six-pounder, and the men seemed anxious to make the experiment. In the twinkling of an eye, however, I remembered Lucknow's hard pressed garrison. If I wounded the tiger he might wound one of my company. The matter might be a serious affair, and would certainly delay us. Every British soldier was of great value then and every hour was of consequence. The amusement we expected from firing our gun at him would not justify me in doing it, so I discreetly contented myself with collecting our scattered bullocks, and having reformed our usual order of march

## A TIGER BARS THE ROAD

I resumed our advance. As we did so, I could see the silhouette of the tiger as it stood out distinctly in the clear Eastern moonlight with the forest as a dark background. He looked imposing, and I was glad to get so safely out of this unpleasant meeting with a lord of the Bengal jungles.

I shall not dwell upon any further incidents of our long and arduous march. We reached Benares on the 10th and Allahabad on the 13th of September, 1857.

Allahabad interested me very much owing to its important position on the Grand Trunk Road, which connected Bengal proper with our upper provinces. Its fort had been built just two centuries before, and though modernized, especially on the land front, much of the work of its native founders still remained. It stands in the fork formed by the junction of the Ganges and the Jumnah rivers, and our barracks stood within this strong, bastioned fort. Geographically it was, and still is, a place of great consequence, as it commands the navigation of both those rivers, and because the mountains of the Central Provinces to the south and south-west of it there narrow in the level country which constitutes the valleys of those two great rivers. It thus dominates the narrow strip of territory through which our railways and roads run north-west and south-east.

Allahabad was then held by a very weak garrison, whilst Benares, the holiest and most important of Hindoo cities, and then the hotbed of Hindoo fanaticism, had not a European battalion in or near it. The fact that no attempt was made by the ruling spirits in the Bengal Mutiny to seize Allahabad and to hold it and Benares in

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

strong force, proved clearly there was not amongst them any leader of real military ability.

The great Mahometan focus in this Mutiny was Delhi, and a small army had been early sent there from the Punjaub by Sir John Lawrence to retake it, and at the time I write of were besieging it. Allahabad, the most important position between Delhi and Calcutta, became therefore the first and most vital point on our long line of communications for us to make absolutely sure of. Had it fallen into the hands of the mutineers a regular siege would have been required to retake it. Allahabad in the enemy's hands, all communication between upper and lower India would have been extremely difficult. But apparently, and happily for us, the general tendency of the individual mutineer was to get to his home with whatever loot he was able to lay hands upon where his regiment had mutinied. Fortunately for us, no great man arose in the upper provinces to take the lead in this Mutiny. Had there been any very able man, amongst the royal family of Delhi for instance, who had had the sense to head a mutiny at the beginning of 1855, when every soldier we could spare from our ridiculously small army had been sent to the Crimea, our trouble and difficulty would have been increased a hundredfold.

A few British pensioners who had settled in India had been collected in the Allahabad Fort, and to it also all Englishmen in the neighbourhood who survived the Mutiny had flown.

I shall not risk wearying my reader by any attempt to describe our march in greater detail. One little episode I will mention, because it gave then, and I believe still gives, the British soldier's view upon the relative physical power

## A HALT AT FUTTEEPORE

and fighting instinct of all native races and of the Englishman. On the march we had halted where there was a small detachment of very fine native soldiers from the Punjaub. In the cool of the evening one of them began exercising his muscles with very heavy clubs, which he handled gracefully and with the utmost ease. My men stood round admiringly, and I asked my pioneer, who was, I believe, the strongest man in the company, if he could handle them as well and as easily. His answer came at once. It was "No, sir, but I'll fight any three of those fellows." It is that belief in the superior pluck and fighting qualities of our race that won us India and still enables us to hold it. Had our men no such confidence in themselves we should never have relieved Lucknow nor retaken Delhi.

At Futteepore, a civil station some forty miles short of Cawnpore, we overtook the company of my battalion that had started one day before us. In a day or two the company that had left Chinsura the day after we had done so also arrived. All the companies of the *Transit* detachment were thus once more united under Major Barnston, to whom we were all devoted as the best soldier in the Battalion. Disheartening news, however, awaited us. It was an order from General Havelock at Cawnpore desiring us to remain at Futteepore for the present. This was indeed a knock-me-down blow to all ranks, for we had pushed forward with the utmost speed, working at times both night and day in order to rejoin our regimental Headquarters with General Havelock's column, before he made his final advance upon Lucknow to relieve that besieged garrison. I was sorry for myself, but was grieved still more for the men of my Company. I had held out to

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

them the hope of their being in time for that event if we hurried our advance in all possible ways, and they had nobly answered the call I made upon them.

We could have easily reached Cawnpore in a day, or a day and a half at most, or could have overtaken our headquarters on the Oudh side of the Ganges before they had reached the Alum Bagh had we been allowed to do so. This order took all the life and go out of my Company for some days. However, we set about making a strong field-work at Futteepore as a "*point d'appui*" on our line of communications.

When the revolt began, Mr. Tucker was the Civil Commissioner at that place. He was a gifted and polished gentleman who thoroughly trusted the natives, and stoutly refused to believe they would ever harm him. They knew him well and had the greatest respect for him as one who was sincerely devoted to their interest. Being a very religious Christian, he had erected a large monolith upon the Grand Trunk Road where it passed through his station, on which the Lord's Prayer was engraved in three well-known native tongues and characters. When the news of the mutiny at Cawnpore reached his station, all the other Europeans retired to Allahabad, but he positively refused to budge, believing that no native would molest him. He was wrong in attributing to those for whom he had long worked strenuously virtues they did not possess. The mutineers attacked him in his house, to the flat top of which he retreated and there sold his life, making his cruel foes pay heavily for their treachery. The natives of the place assured us that he had killed thirteen of his murderers before he ceased to breathe. We were told to collect his remains and bury them. We found his skull

## A MUTINEER HANGED

and collected such of his bones as we could find. We could obtain no coffin, but nailed them up in a box we found in his house, and buried them with all military honours. I mention this as proving that the mutineers did not even spare the white men who throughout their Indian careers had been the most devoted friends to all classes of the native population.

Whilst at Futteepore a trooper was tried and condemned to be hanged. I forget his crime, but he belonged to the 2nd Cavalry, the regiment that had murdered the prisoners and the women and children at Cawnpore. He was to be hanged by my company, and I thought I might have had some difficulty in finding a hangman. Only the year before when a man was condemned to be hanged for the murder of a comrade in a Crimean hospital, no man could be found amongst the fighting ranks in the Army who would act as executioner. Yet the reward offered was £20, and an immediate return home with a free discharge. How different, however, was their feeling when it was a question of hanging a sepoy of the regiment that had killed our women and children at Cawnpore! When I called my company to "attention," and asked if any man would hang him for me, apparently every man wanted to be the hangman! This as an example of how fierce our men had been made by that awful massacre. Had the brutal Nana, and, if possible, his still more brutal brother, Balla Rao, spared the lives of their prisoners and treated them well, in what a different tone would the history of the Mutiny have been written. When two years afterwards we chased a number of the red-coated mutineers over the trans Raptee range of hills into Napaul, one of our spies pointed out to me where Balla Rao had,



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

he said, died whilst crying out in his delirium, "The white men are coming, the white men are coming!"

As soon as General Havelock crossed into Oudh, on his march to relieve Lucknow, our three companies were ordered from Futteepore to Cawnpore. We had no tents, so upon reaching that city we were ordered to bivouac round that never-to-be-forgotten little building where so many of our countrywomen and their children were treacherously massacred by order of the Nana Sahib and his fiendish brother. The well, close to the house, into which their bodies had been thrown, had not been yet filled up, and the rooms of the house itself, besmeared with blood, were still littered with portions of women's underclothing and the shoes and socks and garments of little children. I picked up more than one handful of female hair that had evidently been torn from the heads of those helpless, half-starved victims by the butchers of the city who had been sent there expressly to murder them. A more sickening, a more maddening sight no Englishman has ever looked upon. Upon entering those blood-stained rooms, the heart seemed to stop. The horror of the scene was appalling and called up our worst angry passions. The coldest blooded foreigner would have been deeply affected by it, but it awoke in us, the countrymen of these helpless victims, a fiendish craving for the blood of the cowardly murderers who had ordered the massacre and of the brutes who had perpetrated it. As for our men, revenge was in their eyes. The indignity which had been put upon a proud people by a race whom we regarded as inferior in every sense was maddening. The idea that a native should have dared to put his hands upon an Englishwoman was too much for our insular pride. An all-absorbing craving for ruth-

## THE CAWNPORE HOUSE OF BLOOD

less vengeance, that most unchristian of passions, was deep in all hearts. The walls had been scrawled over as if every man in General Havelock's force who could write had there recorded his vow to God that he would exact punishment in full measure for this crime, which blood alone could expiate. I read many of these scribbled invocations, and, though written in ungrammatical, badly spelt English, their meaning was unmistakable. But no man, no matter what his rank might be, left those precincts without clenched teeth and a longing in his heart for vengeance.

It is easy now at this distance of time, and in our quiet homes, to enlarge upon the "quality of mercy," and on Christ's holy teaching : but had any English bishop visited that scene of butchery when I saw it, I verily believe that he would have buckled on a sword. The blood is now cool. The grave has closed upon the instigators and perpetrators of that hellish crime, that awful tragedy, and justice has been appeased. But it was not so in those days : "Let me see Thy vengeance on them," was the cry heard wherever the English tongue was then spoken. We had still to reconquer India, and in doing so to deal with those fiends who had shamefully illtreated and murdered Englishwomen. As I look back to that time and think of its events, I am lost in amazement, mingled with a sort of national pride, at the smallness of the retribution we exacted, and how truthfully we can assert that mercy did season our justice.

## CHAPTER XIX

### Cawnpore in 1857—The Nana's Country Place— Advance into Oudh—Besieged in the Alum Bagh Palace

**A**T Cawnpore we found the headquarters of the 1st Battalion North Staffordshire Regiment, and the sick and wounded left behind by General Havelock when he had marched for Lucknow. The situation at Cawnpore then was by no means re-assuring. The officer in command, a brave old soldier who had served in the Peninsula under the Duke of Wellington, was in no way equal to the position his seniority as a colonel had conferred upon him. The last news from Delhi was not very promising ; we knew that Sir James Outram was closely invested in Lucknow ; the Gwalior contingent threatened our communications with Allahabad, and the Nana, with a considerable force of Foot and some horsed guns, was reported to be in the neighbourhood of Bithoor, that ruffian's principal country place.

Our brave old commander in Cawnpore resolved to attack this force at Bithoor. He may have been a good battalion commander in his day, but surely neither the science nor the art of war were amongst the subjects he was familiar with. He had, however, the good fortune to be subsequently killed in action : lucky man !

A small column was formed of all the available odds and ends of troops then in Cawnpore, Major Barnston's three companies of my battalion being amongst them. There



## CAWNPORE IN 1857

was a field battery of Bengal Artillery, which we irreverently spoke of as our "cow-guns," because they were drawn by bullocks. They were cheap animals, and if killed in action could always be eaten. This sort of battery was then common in the Bengal Presidency.

We marched all night along a good pukha road and came into action early the following morning. Our detachment of white soldiers, consisting of men of the old historic Northumberland Fusiliers, under my most gallant Crimean friend, Captain, now General Bigge, and of Major Barnston's companies of the 90th Light Infantry, were kept too long in column on the hard metalled road. The consequence was, that the enemy's first round shot flew rattling through our ranks, killing and wounding some ten of our men. White soldiers in India were then worth more than the Koh-i-noor to us as an Empire, and this stupidly-caused loss annoyed us much. We felt it all the more because the usual length of time it took our "cow-guns" to come into action was upon this occasion prolonged from an amusing cause. We had some cowardly half-caste police immediately in front of the guns, who, upon the first round shot coming amongst us, fell flat on their stomachs and refused to move. Some rough usage from boots and sticks became necessary before they could be induced to remove their vile bodies to allow our guns to come into action. I must not omit an episode that caused this little skirmish to be remembered by most who took part in it. In an explosion at Cawnpore, some days previously, an Irish soldier, Timothy O'Brian, of the Northumberland Fusiliers, had been severely hurt. When he heard that his detachment was under orders to march and attack the rebels, he crept from the hospital and secreted himself in one of the dhoolies told off for the march. In

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

this manner he contrived to get to the front. When the first shot was fired, he was seen staggering to his place in his company, his legs still bound in bandages. When asked, "What the devil he was doing there?" his answer was, "As long as Tim O'Brian can put one leg before the other his comrades shall never go into action without him."<sup>1</sup>

I need not describe what followed. The operation was badly planned and still worse executed, as judged by the bumptious wisdom of my brother officers and myself. However, we drove the enemy back, and then bivouacked for the night outside the Nana's palace. I kept up a rattling good fire through the cold hours of the morning, using the great mahogany legs of that villain's billiard table as fuel. The following day we returned to Cawnpore. This was my first little action during the Mutiny, and it did not incline me to think highly of old Indian colonels of British regiments. Most certainly none of us learnt anything from it.

During the few days I passed at Cawnpore I made a survey of the barracks and of all the ground round them where poor General Wheeler had constructed the entrenchments which his gallant party so stoutly defended. Whilst so engaged, I was accosted by an officer who was one of the only two or three survivors of that prolonged siege and of the massacre which followed it. The description he gave me of the dreadful days of suspense our feeble garrison endured was intensely interesting.<sup>2</sup> I wrote much of it in

<sup>1</sup> This scene is well described by General Bigge in the *St. George's Gazette*, the Regimental Newspaper of "The Old and Bold."

<sup>2</sup> If any of my readers have not read "*Cawnpore*," by Sir George Trevelyan, Bart., I recommend them strongly to send for it at once. It is the most thrilling history I have ever read.

## NEWS FROM LUCKNOW

my diary at the time, but, as I shall mention later on, when the Gwalior contingent attacked Cawnpore during our subsequent absence at the relief of Lucknow, the enemy were allowed—through some one's fault—to loot the baggage that I and others left there when we crossed into Oudh. My small contribution to this baggage was a little box in which I had placed my diary. When subsequently Lord Clyde, returning from what was "the real and effective relief of Lucknow," drove off the Gwalior contingent from Cawnpore, and our cavalry got in amongst them, a Cross of the Legion of Honour was found upon a sepoy who was killed. This must, I think, have been the vagabond who looted my medals, for I believe I was the only one of those whose traps were stored there who owned that decoration. I wish I had caught that sepoy!

We now heard of General Havelock's proceedings up to the day he had left his bivouac at the Alum Bagh to fight his way through Lucknow to "The Residency," in what I may well call the centre of the city. By the route he took it was a hazardous operation with his guns and other impedimenta. But nothing could have stopped the men who then entered that city with him and Sir James Outram.

The news we received told us of four brother officers who had been killed near the Alum Bagh. One was Nichol Grahame, the bravest of the brave, who, amongst the first who entered the Great Redan on September 8, 1855, was, I believe, the last British soldier to leave it. No more daring man ever died for England.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> He was the uncle of that distinguished officer, Lieut.-General Sir A. Hunter, K.C.B., now commanding the troops in Scotland. When the surgeon in reply to a question from young Grahame told him he must die, he lay back and said, "All right, I die like a soldier."

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

We were all impatient to get forward, and at last we received the order to do so. On October 21, 1857, our detachment of three companies, with some odds and ends of other regiments, about 500 men and four field guns, under the command of Major Barnston, crossed the Ganges by the Bridge of Boats there, bound for the Alum Bagh, a palace within a mile of Lucknow. We were all in the seventh heaven of delight at the prospect of at last getting into serious touch with the enemy. We were to take a convoy of 500 carts of provisions to the Alum Bagh and then to return to Cawnpore without delay. Hope told us we might be fortunate enough to escape the latter part of our instructions, for our one all-absorbing desire was to get at the enemy: we left the rest to the varying chances of war. I had picked up a good Madras servant on my way to Cawnpore, who was invaluable to me throughout the following eighteen months' campaigning in Oudh. He was as brave as any man in my company, and used to chaff any soldier he saw "bobbing" at a shot that went uncomfortably near. He had managed to find a coolie for me in Cawnpore, and I had bought a horse, for which I was fortunate enough to secure a syce—a native groom. The coolie carried some cooking pots on his head, together with a bundle consisting of my greatcoat, in which were rolled up the dressing-gown rescued from our wreck, a few flannel shirts, socks, pocket-handkerchiefs, and a spare pair of boots, etc. Except what I carried on my person those were all the worldly possessions with which I crossed into Oudh, where I was destined to campaign for the next year and a half. I carried a watch in my pocket and a telescope over my shoulder, to which was fastened a small compass. I had extremely little to lose, and my heart was as light as my



## ADVANCE INTO OUDH

kit. I had nearly a hundred good men behind me, whom I trusted and who I believe trusted me. What more could any young captain of four and twenty wish for ?

Our first two marches through Oudh were uneventful. The country was flat like a billiard table, and quite park-like in character. The road—very good and absolutely straight—passed through some deserted villages, and fine topes of mango and tamarind trees in its neighbourhood, each with a masonry-enclosed well, added much to the beauty of the surrounding landscape. Pious men who are successful in business often plant these groves and dig the attendant well for the benefit of travellers. They are usually the votary offerings of some Mohammedan in recognition of Allah having granted his prayer when he was in mental or bodily trouble, or of a pious Hindoo desirous of squaring matters in the spiritual world with some particular deity in his curiously extensive and unclean mythology.

To the wearied wayfarer along a dusty white Indian road during the heat of the day such resting places are indeed most grateful. Many a time when I thought my head would split from long exposure to the sun I have felt truly thankful to the man who had blessed the traveller with such a haven, where he not only found shelter from the sun and a drink of cool pure water, but where he could have a bucket of it poured over his burning head and the scorched nape of his neck. Oh, what a detestable country India is to campaign in during the hot weather !

The Sye River is an insignificant stream where the high-road to Lucknow crosses it at Bunnee bridge, some twelve miles from the Alum Bagh Palace. We were assured that the enemy intended to hold that position. It was my

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

company's turn to form the advanced guard that day, so all ranks looked forward to at least a satisfactory skirmish there. When I started before daybreak, a thick mist prevented us from seeing more than a hundred yards in any direction. Having reached the neighbourhood of the bridge I halted my company, and, drawing my revolver, went forward alone. I found the place deserted and the brick bridge destroyed.

Our three companies of the 90th Light Infantry took up their position in a nice little tope of mango trees beyond the river, and the rest of the day was spent in getting our convoy across the ford, which grew deeper the more it was used. But we made light of work now, for was not Lucknow close at hand ?

In the middle of the night I was awoke up by the cry of "Stand to your arms." We were quickly in the ranks in profound silence. But no enemy was to be seen or heard, and the outlying pickets were quiet all round us. No one could say who had given the alarm. But going round my company as it stood silently in its ranks, I stumbled over a man on the ground. I shook him, but he was evidently unconscious, and feeling his face over, I found he was bleeding from a wound in the head. The matter was mysterious. Questioning the men if they could explain it, his comrade said that whilst asleep he was awoke up by finding a man trying to strangle him. Only half awake, both assailed and assailant struggled to their feet, when the latter, clubbing his rifle, hit his supposed enemy over the head, and knocked him down : he then cried out, "Stand to your arms." The whole detachment had thus been disturbed in their bivouac through the indigestion and consequent dreams of this man, and I hope his broken head may have

## ADVANCE TO THE ALUM BAGH

cured him of a malady that had interfered seriously with the repose of his comrades.

Daybreak next morning, October 24, 1857, ushered in a fine Sunday, but it was to be no day of rest for any of us. To my great delight, "I Company" was detailed to form the rear guard, so we were bound to come in for any fighting there should be. I was ordered to remain where we had bivouacked until I had started every cart and camel on the road towards the Alum Bagh Palace, where General Havelock had left a garrison with all his sick, his elephants, and other impedimenta. We felt tolerably certain that the enemy, who had come out from Lucknow in some force to oppose us, would do their utmost to capture our long straggling convoy before we could get it into the Alum Bagh. Our idiotic enemy ought to have tried that during each day's march we made after leaving Cawnpore. Now, with a place of safety so near ahead of us, their chances of success were greatly lessened.

Oudh, between the Ganges and the Goomtee rivers, is a dead level plain, well cultivated and supplied with villages and topes of mango and tamarind trees. The only made—or, in the vernacular, the only pukha—road of any importance was that between Cawnpore and Lucknow, on which we were then advancing. After a long wait and much bad language, I succeeded in getting my last gharry, or native cart, under way. But our progress was extremely slow, for those horrible creaking vehicles seemed to break down purposely to annoy us. The infernal gharrywans, or drivers, seemed to be quite indifferent, and to think it was our business to mend their carts when they broke down. I am afraid that the shoulders of many a gharrywan that day became disagreeably acquainted with our walking

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

sticks, for at first they would make no attempt either to mend their carts or to hurry forward. The enemy's cavalry followed us and several times came so close that I had to halt and treat them to a volley or two, firing by sections, so that they should never be able to charge home without a warm reception from at least half of my men. Some field guns opened upon us more than once, but the "cow battery" we had with us kept them fairly quiet, and its shells must have cost them some loss. The enemy had no shells, and when beyond the range of "canister" could only annoy us with round shot, which practically did no harm. I had no one but my own company near me for a long time, but even my ninety or a hundred men were too much for the cowardly rascals, of whom we killed many. I knew that I had a first rate soldier in the officer commanding the column, Major Roger Barnston, and that if he thought I was in any serious danger he would send me reinforcements. Our detachment had a few men wounded; Captain Guise was one of them. He had already lost his right arm, but, daring to a fault, he nevertheless would engage one of the enemy in single combat with a right handed sword, in which encounter he nearly lost his left hand also.

The name "Alum Bagh" means "the Garden of the World," and had been given to a palace built by some royal Begum beyond the southern suburbs of Lucknow. It was a large three-storied and very substantially built square brick building, with a tower at each corner, in which there was a staircase. Round it was a large square garden, whose sides were about four hundred yards each, the whole enclosed by a thick wall some twelve or more feet in height. There was a large two storied gateway opening out upon the road, beyond which was a very pretty little mosque with minarets.

## BESIEGED IN THE ALUM BAGH PALACE

At each angle of the garden was a tower, round the outside of which we had constructed a bastion with a feeble attempt at an abattis beyond the ditch. General Havelock had left all his tents and other impedimenta, including sixty-four wounded and the same number of sick, together with some twenty elephants, at this place, under a guard of 280 men. The officer in command was an old major of the Gordon Highlanders, upon whom the responsibility of his position apparently weighed heavily. I know he was a brave man at heart, but it struck us young captains that he was much too cautious. A great sportsman and a remarkable shot, though no tiger had any terror for him, responsibility made him over anxious and decidedly querulous.

Our horses soon began to suffer from want of food, so one day several of us went outside the gates some few hundred yards to protect our grass cutters whilst they scraped together a little herbage for our poor starving animals. The enemy, seeing this, sent forward some skirmishers, and we had an exciting little interchange of rifle bullets with them. I suppose we were getting the best of it, for at last bang came a 32-pounder shot among us. This attracted our old Commandant's attention, and, looking out from the top of the palace, he espied us, the delinquents who had thus brought down a fire upon the post in his charge. He was furious, sent for our commanding officer, Major Barnston, and ordered him to go out and place us all in arrest, my old and valued friend, Captain Bigge, of the Northumberland Fusiliers, being one of the number. We returned to our tents wrathful at this old gentleman's "unheard-of presumption," as we deemed his action to be in the matter. That night, or the next morning, Barnston went to him to ask upon what charge we were to be tried,

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as the officers of our regiment were not accustomed to be placed under arrest. The old gentleman fumed, and at last ordered us to be released with a wiggling. This conduct on his part did not tend to harmony in the garrison, for after all, if any real or serious danger presented itself, it would mainly be upon us young gentlemen lately from the Crimea he would have to depend. Very improperly we all thenceforth disliked him and thought little of him as a soldier.

Our life when shut up with him in the Alum Bagh was extremely monotonous. From a battery at the "Yellow House," about 1,500 yards off, and situated near the suburbs of the city, we were daily saluted by some 32-pounder shot thrown in amongst our tents. Sometimes they struck the palace itself, and occasionally a horse or a gun-bullock was killed, but it is astonishing how little damage any such ill-directed and random fire ever does. It would have been very easy any morning at daybreak to take this battery which thus constantly annoyed us and occasionally caused us loss. But our old Highland Commandant would not sanction any such enterprise. His garrison was small, his sick and wounded in hospital were numerous, and he over-estimated the dangers of his position; at least we young soldiers thought so. He was urged by my commanding officer, Major Barnston—who understood war thoroughly—to let us take this battery at early dawn and spike its guns. We were then well into the cold weather, and just before daybreak at that season the sepoy is at his worst. Almost paralysed with cold, he is nearly torpid and good for very little. All ranks in those three companies of my regiment were young, and, as they had but lately served in the batteries before Sebastopol, they thought

## BESIEGED IN THE ALUM BAGH PALACE

little either of the feeble fire from this battery or of the sepoy's who worked it. If permitted to attack it they would have made short work of both the battery and its garrison. But the commandant had been in India almost all his service; he had seen next to nothing of war, and knew little of its ways; besides, the sun had apparently taken all "the go" out of him. He would not hazard the risk of failure, so we had to sulk and quietly submit to the insolence of these rebels, who must have thought us a poor lot in consequence. Perhaps I am prejudiced even still against this old major and do his memory injustice. But I write what all of us young captains and subalterns thought at the time. The fact that we had served in the Crimea had doubtless made us bumptious, but we were all bored at being thus cooped up in a way which the circumstances of the moment—as far as we understood them—did not warrant. I think this inflated notion of our superiority over those who had not had the advantage of serving against the Russians was a notable feeling with us generally throughout the Mutiny, and caused many of us to overestimate our importance and to undervalue our Indianized comrades.

We had very little to interest us, or even to occupy our minds, whilst we were besieged in the Alum Bagh. There were no books to while away the tedious, oh! the very long hours of our imprisonment. We daily mounted the roof of the Palace to gaze round through our telescopes and examine the enemy's position between us and the city. But our eyes were still more longingly bent in the Cawnpore direction. "Sister Anne, Sister Anne, do you see any one coming?" was the common question we asked our friends who possessed the best binoculars. When the enemy treated us to

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

a few round shot, they gave us unwittingly something interesting, often amusing, to talk about. But we were a dull lot. I have often thought since of what a boon to our garrison in every way a Baden-Powell would have been ! Under his auspices we should have had theatricals, and if our united store of books could not have supplied us with a play, why, he would have written one for us and taken himself the leading part in it, either as an old man or as a beautiful young girl. It is men of his bright imagination, resources and diversified talents, a first-rate soldier whom all ranks feel to be a real comrade, who springs to the front during a siege, or when any body of men are in difficulties. In all trying positions such a man is indeed worth much.

Not far from my tent were drawn up in a long row the elephants General Havelock had left behind him when he started thence in the hope of being able to bring back with him the women and children besieged in the Lucknow Residency. These poor animals grew thinner every day. They were on a short allowance of flour, and but very little green food ever came in their way. Their backbones became more prominent as weeks flew by, and at last their bodies assumed very much the shape of an upturned deep-keeled sailing boat in a somewhat dilapidated condition. All of us who were fond of animals felt much for these patient and invaluable slaves. I watched them many an hour, and their intelligent ways and habits interested me greatly. By day their bodies are never entirely at rest. Although their skin is very thick the smallest fly irritates it, and consequently their huge broad ears never cease to flap nor their tails to swing to keep these torments from them. To still further protect them their trunks are employed in taking up pints of dust which they blow over their much wrinkled skins,



## MR. KAVANAGH AND THE KOSSIDS

whose very thickness makes the lines formed by these wrinkles soft and a prey to every species of fly. Indeed, these lines on their skin form a pattern that always reminded me of the marks on old crackled china.

Kossids, that is native messengers carrying news, usually written in Greek characters on small slips of thin paper tightly rolled in a quill, were occasionally able to get through the enemy's lines. But the risk was great, and more than most natives were ready to incur. Outram was very anxious to afford the Commander-in-Chief the benefit of his local knowledge in preparing his schemes for the relief of Lucknow. But it was impossible to send a document describing any such plan by a kossid. This coming to the knowledge of Mr. Kavanagh, a European clerk in one of our public offices in Lucknow, he at once proposed to try and reach our camp disguised as a native. From long residence in the country he spoke Hindostanee extremely well, and, it might be said, like a native. He asked to be allowed to take with him a trustworthy native—in fact an experienced kossid—whom he knew well and upon whose coolness and discretion he could rely. This native would do most of the talking that might be necessary. Mr. Kavanagh's offer was gladly accepted, and to him Sir James Outram described the plan he considered best for Sir Colin Campbell to follow in his intended advance upon the Lucknow Residency. Mr. Kavanagh knew the city and its vicinity thoroughly. He would be able to afford Sir Colin a vast amount of topographical information that was likely to be of inestimable value to him and to the relieving army.

Mr. Kavanagh and his native companion crossed the Goomtee River during the night of November 9, 1857, without much apparent difficulty, and, thanks chiefly to

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the coolness and quick address of his companion and guide, he reached Sir Colin Campbell's camp the next morning. For this splendid and daring service the Queen awarded him the Victoria Cross, and no man ever deserved it more. The daring native was also liberally rewarded. As I shall mention further on, I made Mr. Kavanagh's acquaintance when my company and I were in rather a "tight place" during our endeavour to join hands with the Lucknow besieged garrison.

## CHAPTER XX

### Sir Colin Campbell's Relief of Lucknow

WHEN it became generally known that the Bengal native army had mutinied, the eyes of all men, British and native, were turned to Delhi. Men asked one another, "What would the native Royal Family do?" It had never been forgotten by the people that the man to whom we accorded the empty title of king was the legal representative of the old Mohammedan conquerors and rulers of India whom we had dispossessed. The hostile feeling of these Princes towards us was proverbial, but the Indian world knew there was not a really able man amongst them. When all the English officials and other Europeans in Delhi fled for their lives, its royal palace at once became the headquarters of this formidable rebellion. We had long permitted this Moslem royal family to reside there surrounded with every luxury, but we had never allowed any of its members the smallest share in the government of the country. The native princes, thus bereft of all power, were naturally discontented with their lot, and when the Mutiny broke out it was equally natural they should side with the sepoys who were prepared to recognize the Great Mogul as their lawful sovereign. It may be assumed, I think, that these princes were fully aware from the first of the formidable and secret combination against us. All available British troops were at once collected in hot haste from north, south, east and

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

west to besiege Delhi, and upon the result depended for a long time the question as to whether we should be able to hold our own beyond the space enclosed within the old Mahratta Ditch at Calcutta pending the arrival of reinforcements from home.

This Siege of Delhi was the most memorable event in the history of the great Mutiny, and never did the pluck and endurance of the British and of our Punjaub soldiers of all ranks, from the general to the private, shine forth more brilliantly. How I wished at the time to be there. Its assault and capture marked the turning point in the Mutiny, and we all breathed more freely when it fell. It was a splendid military achievement, and our subsequent proceedings in Oudh and elsewhere, though most creditable to all concerned, were not in importance to be compared to it. When I subsequently learned the details of its events from Sir Grant Hope and his aide-de-camp, Augustus Anson, I realized how much I had missed. The story of that siege and of the operations in its neighbourhood told to me by them sounded to my ears like an epic. It is not to be surpassed either in the mighty consequences that hung upon its issue, in the brilliancy of its daily incidents, nor in examples of heroic daring on the part of the besiegers, by any siege I know of in ancient or modern history.

When the news of its fall first reached us in Oudh we felt that the backbone of the Mutiny had been broken. The eyes of all Hindostan had from the first been turned towards Delhi, and upon the line that would be taken by its Princes. They certainly threw their lot in with our mutinous sepoys, and they were now in our hands as prisoners. Delhi retaken became once more an appanage of our Indian Empire.

## THE RELIEFS AND SIEGES OF LUCKNOW

The news received went on to say that most of our Delhi army were already on the march southwards to help us, and were expected to cross at Cawnpore into Oudh about the 28th instant (October). Sir Colin Campbell was to come with it, and upon his arrival at the Alum Bagh would take forward our three company detachment with him.

As some misapprehension has arisen from the manner in which the expressions, "The Siege of Lucknow" and "The Relief of Lucknow," are often used, I will here make a few remarks upon the subject that may be of use to my reader.

It is not generally remembered that we had two "sieges" and two so-called "reliefs" of that place about the end of 1857 and the beginning of 1858. In the first siege, the garrison consisted of a mere handful of British soldiers. They occupied the unfortified Residency, which was crowded with English women and children who had taken refuge there from many parts of Oudh. The besiegers were a vast horde of mutineers and of armed men from the city and neighbouring districts. That truly great man, General Sir Henry Lawrence, who was "Chief Commissioner" to the Court of Oudh, assumed military command of the place as soon as it was hemmed in by the enemy. But within a few days of its being invested he was most unfortunately killed in his room overlooking the Goomtee River by a shell from the enemy. The command of the garrison then devolved upon Colonel Inglis, 32nd Regiment, who, though by no means an able man in any respect, possessed the pluck and decision to abide by Sir Henry Lawrence's injunction to hold out as long as possible, and never to make any terms with the treacherous enemy around him.

General Sir James Outram, having been appointed Chief

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Commissioner of Oudh, *vice* General Sir Henry Lawrence, reached Cawnpore September 16, 1857. There he found General Havelock with the gallant troops that General had so often led to victory. As a general officer, Outram was Havelock's senior in rank, and according to Army regulations the military command devolved upon the senior. But, with his habitual chivalry in all matters, great and small, and a magnanimity all his own, he waived his military right in General Havelock's favour. How very very few would have acted thus! His divisional order of September 16, 1857, spoke the man. In it he said he felt it was due to General Havelock and to the noble exertions he had made to relieve Lucknow, "that to him should accrue the honour of the achievement," that "in gratitude for, and in admiration of, the brilliant deeds in arms achieved by General Havelock and his gallant troops, he will cheerfully waive his rank on the occasion, and will accompany the force to Lucknow in his civil capacity as Chief Commissioner of Oudh, tendering his military services to General Havelock as a volunteer. On the relief of Lucknow, the Major-General will resume his position at the head of the forces." This noble unselfishness ratified the title unofficially, but unanimously, accorded to him, of "Bayard of India."

The small garrison under Colonel Inglis was sorely pressed and in great straits when Havelock forced his way into the besieged Residency. This operation, which was effected after much hard fighting and considerable loss in killed and wounded, constituted the first "Relief of Lucknow." But in reality this so-called "relief" was little more than a succour thrown into that besieged place.

Upon reaching the Lucknow Residency, Outram found his force was much too small to warrant him in any attempt

## HAVELOCK'S RELIEF OF LUCKNOW

to carry off the large number of women, children, and wounded men of the garrison, and his own wounded also. He had therefore to content himself with awaiting the arrival of an army strong enough to do so, though his presence and the troops he brought with him saved the old garrison and had given new life and vigour to every white person in the place.

The space covered by the Residency was much too small for the now augmented garrison, so he at once extended it considerably, taking in the buildings and palaces known as the Taree Khotee, the Fureed Buksh, and the Chattah Munzil, all situated on the river Goomtee, below the Residency.

As described in the next chapter, Lucknow was eventually relieved by Sir Colin Campbell in November, 1857, an operation that is commonly referred to as the "Second and final Relief of Lucknow." Having carried off the garrison, with its women, children, sick and wounded, and leaving a division under Sir James Outram outside and to the south of the city, near the Alum Bagh, Sir Colin Campbell hurried back with all speed to save Cawnpore, then hardly pressed by a very large hostile force and unskillfully defended by its small British garrison.

When, therefore, the "second and final relief" of Lucknow was effected by Sir Colin Campbell, he found the garrison was under the command of Outram, not of Havelock. The latter was disliked by our men, whilst Outram was their hero. Havelock was one of the Covenanter School, a hard man, as hard upon himself as he was upon others. In the days when Christ's followers had to struggle for existence with the pagan rulers they worked amongst, Havelock would have willingly died a martyr's death in his Master's cause.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

He was not of the nineteenth century ; his noble spirit belonged to the age when men died gladly for the faith they believed in. But, judging him as a leader of soldiers and from a soldier's point of view, he was, according to my estimate of the two men, Outram's inferior, except from a purely religious aspect.

The second siege of Lucknow was that carried out by Sir Colin Campbell in March, 1858. In it, as well as in his relief of that garrison, I took an active but a humble part as captain commanding my company in the 90th Light Infantry. I shall now endeavour to tell my reader what I saw and was cognizant of upon those two occasions.

I do not know of any instance in military history where a general was called upon to face a more difficult, a more dangerous problem than that which Sir Colin Campbell had before him in the relief of Lucknow's beleaguered garrison. The population of Lucknow was estimated to be 250,000, to which must be added a crowd of mutineers from the Bengal army, which had largely consisted of Oudh men. His task was rendered all the more critical and delicate by the number of women and children who had to be brought away from the heart of a closely invested city. The soldiers of all ranks whom he had available for this attempt did not exceed 4,500, whilst the enemy in and around Lucknow must certainly have been twelve times as numerous.

The nearest British garrison was at Cawnpore, fifty-three miles away, and for the defence of that unfortified city, only 1,000 bayonets could be spared, half of whom were sepoyes of no great fighting value. The Gwalior contingent was known to be already on the march to attack it, and although reinforcements from England were almost



## SIR C. CAMPBELL'S RELIEF OF LUCKNOW

daily being dribbled into it, the place could not resist any prolonged and serious attack.

According to my views, the plan adopted by General Havelock for the relief of the Lucknow garrison had been faulty, but the plucky pertinacity with which that veteran—enfeebled by age, illness, and a very long service in India—fought his way through the streets of Lucknow into the Residency, appealed to all classes of the English people. John Bull never fails to admire chivalrous daring, and is proud of the general who persists in heroic efforts to succour threatened comrades, and who succeeds in doing so.

Sir Colin Campbell was not a man, however, to repeat the blunder made by General Havelock, whose force had suffered heavily from being taken through some of the narrow streets of the city. He had the advantage also of Sir James Outram's opinion—based upon full local knowledge—as to the route by which the Residency could be most easily reached with the smallest loss, and he entirely agreed with that general's views. The plan of the city, brought through the enemy's lines by the plucky Mr. Kavanagh, on which Outram had marked the route he advised Sir Colin to take, was of great value to him. That line he meant to follow, and practically it would enable him to reach the neighbourhood of the Sekunder Bagh without encountering any seriously fortified position held by the enemy.

On November 4 clouds of dust along the Cawnpore road told us in the Alum Bagh that troops were approaching, and an advanced party of cavalry was soon at our gate. It was not, however, Sir Colin's main army. It was merely the advanced guard of the cavalry division under Brigadier-General Little, who had come on ahead from Sir Hope

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Grant's camp at Buntera, about six miles distant, to obtain and take back for the Commander-in-Chief the plan of Lucknow that Sir James Outram had sent to the Alum Bagh. We were given to understand at the time that Major McIntyre refused to give up Sir James Outram's despatch, saying that his orders were to deliver it himself to Sir Colin and to no one else. The cavalry column had accordingly its march to no purpose. I believe this was the case, for when Sir Colin subsequently reached the Alum Bagh, I was on the roof of the palace and witnessed the meeting between him and Major McIntyre. I was near enough to see Sir Colin dance a sort of war dance round the unfortunate major, often shaking his fist at him in dire anger as he did so, whilst the delinquent stood with hands behind him, and with his eyes on the ground like a naughty schoolboy. Although the punishment of one who had so inconsiderately hurt my *amour propre* in needlessly putting me under arrest ought to have rejoiced my heart, I sincerely felt for the gallant old officer whom a misconception of duty led to adopt so unusual a course.

Brigadier-General Little and his cavalry were accordingly soon on their way back to Buntera, which Sir Colin reached some days afterwards. The relieving army, with Sir Colin at its head, reached our camp in the Alum Bagh November 12.

Early in the forenoon of November 14, 1857, the three companies of the 90th Light Infantry, of which I commanded one, moved from the Alum Bagh, and joined the Brigade of that distinguished leader, Colonel Adrian Hope. It consisted of the 1st Battalion Shropshire Light Infantry, the 2nd Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, and the scratch battalion under Major Barnston, made up

## SIR COLIN REACHES THE ALUM BAGH

by the addition to our three companies of some companies of the 84th Regiment and of the Madras Fusiliers to a total of about 600 bayonets. We had no tents, and a bivouac towards the middle of November in Oudh, where wood for great fires is difficult to obtain, is not the way in which "Micky Free" would have selected to pass a night.

Sir Colin's relieving army consisted of about 700 sabres, 3,800 bayonets, and some 24 guns, of which a few were heavy pieces. Having deposited his camp equipment and all unnecessary impedimenta within the Alum Bagh enclosure, he started November 14, 1857, on his difficult and most important mission. We had with us fourteen days' provisions for ourselves and for all those whom we hoped to relieve in Lucknow. Instead of pushing straight forwards by the road General Havelock had injudiciously followed as far as the Char-Bagh bridge, we moved off at once to our right, and entirely clear of the city, passing by the old ruined fort of Jellahabad, and keeping well in the open, where we should always have the advantage of the enemy. We circled, as it were, round the southern and eastern outskirts of Lucknow at a distance of about a mile and a half from the then unfordable canal which there formed the city boundary, until we struck the river Goomtee as it flows below the high ground upon which stands, in imposing grandeur, the palace known as the Dil Khoosha—in English, "The Heart's Delight." It is about three and a half miles south-east of the Residency, and was the shooting residence of the Kings of Oudh. A high wall of sun-dried brick surrounded it, through which openings were easily made. As we entered it, several small deer of various sorts ran about, terrified at this unusual invasion; most of them were in the soldiers' camp kettles that evening. We were thrown forward

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

into a line of skirmishers, and as we advanced an elephant came charging backwards through my company with the lower half of his trunk hanging by a strip of skin to the other half above it. This had been done by a round shot, and the poor beast was trumpeting loudly from pain as he passed me. I knew the elephant well for a couple of years afterwards: it got on satisfactorily, its mahout feeding it by hand, and taking it daily into deep water to drink.

Below us, and about three-quarters of a mile north of the Dil Khoosha, stood a very large, ugly, and un-Indian looking edifice known as the Martiniere College, between which and the city were fine mango gardens. From both it and the Dil Khoosha the enemy retired upon our approach, treating us to a few round shot as they did so. Having reached this college, we turned sharp to the left—in a north-westerly direction—along the road that led from it straight into the city, and took up a position in a fine garden of trees covered by Haidar's Canal, which there forming the south-eastern boundary of the city, empties itself about a mile lower down its course into the Goomtee River. Our long straggling column of commissariat animals was so far behind that Sir Colin determined to push on no further that day. Fires were soon lit, and the smell of cooking had begun to gladden the noses of our hungry men when the enemy showed signs of attacking. They opened upon us with some guns, and plied us with musketry pretty freely. We fell in and advanced towards Banks' House, which stood as a prominent feature beyond the canal just referred to. Captain Peel's guns had come into action within a few hundred yards of it, and as we came up and were about to pass to the front through them, he held up his hand and

## THE ENEMY'S BRASS SHELLS

said, with the cool affability which always distinguished him, "One more broadside, if you please, gentlemen." The expression smelt of the sea, and amused us much. What a splendid fellow he was! We halted, he poured in his "broadside," and we then doubled down to the canal, but found it unfordable. However, the enemy showed no more signs of annoying us, and my company having been left there on picket and as a protection for Peel's guns, the rest of Barnston's scratch battalion retired to their bivouac in the Martiniere grounds. The enemy threw several small shells amongst us during the evening from a mortar near the canal bank. I don't think any of them burst, or if they did, we at any rate received no injury from them. I only refer to them because upon no other occasion had I ever seen brass shells made use of. They had evidently been recently cast in the Lucknow bazaars. The night was cold, dark, and very still, so that as I went round my sentries along the canal I could plainly hear the enemy talking on the opposite bank. We remained on picket in a hollow out of sight all the next day, November 15. The enemy fired heavily upon any one who showed himself, but I don't think they harmed a man of my company. The sun was very hot all through that day, and we felt it much, having neither tree nor wall to shelter us. We were glad to be relieved that evening, as we had been up and about all the previous night. We all slept soundly, though our bivouac was cold; I know I did.

Next day, November 16, we did not move off until nearly noon. Sir Colin Campbell had paid us a visit some time before, and telling Major Barnston that he wished to see the officers of his "scratch battalion," he made us a little address. He impressed upon us the necessity of using the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

bayonet as much as possible when we got into the city, and not halting to fire when we could avoid doing so.

Upon "falling in" we moved to our right, my company leading. Passing round a native village, and then turning towards the city, we marched between the village and the Goomtee River to the canal, upon the bank of which we had been on picket about a mile higher up the previous night. We crossed this canal close to where it joined the Goomtee and below where the enemy had dammed it, and so got over it with dry feet. Cutting off a wide bend of the river, we made for the northern end of a village—about a mile from where we had crossed the canal—which I afterwards knew as Sultangunj, into the long and narrow main street of which we turned in a southerly direction. It was deserted, and for some time we were unopposed. I think we had two or three men of what was then the best of cavalry regiments—the 9th Lancers—in front of us. Behind them came my company, and then some twenty or thirty more of that regiment. A couple of 18-pounders were not far off, for Sir Colin was evidently aware that the enemy strongly held the Sekunder Bagh (the garden of Alexander the Great) and the Shah Nujif mosque beyond it, and that heavy guns would be required to breach the thick, twenty-feet high brick walls surrounding both those places. The Sekunder Bagh was a garden about a hundred yards square, with a substantial turret at each angle and a high two or three storied gateway in the middle of its southern face.

Behind the guns came either the remainder of Barnston's battalion or the 93rd Highlanders ; both were close together. In passing through the deserted village, which the enemy made no attempt to defend, we suffered nothing for some time, though a continued flight of bullets was passing over

## MY PLUCKY COLOUR-SERGEANT

us. My Madras servant kept close behind me. He was a very plucky fellow, much given to looting and quite indifferent to danger. His brother was a native officer in a Madras Sepoy Regiment. All along the village street, at every short check, and there were many of them, he kicked in the door of the house nearest to him, and I believe collected (!) a good amount of rupees, for he knew where to look for them in the roofs and floors. At last I saw the few lancers who were in front of me huddling close together in a corner of the street. The fire was becoming too hot for mounted men ; indeed, I thought at the time it was unwise to have placed them in so false a position. We now pushed forward beyond them, and had to cross a tolerably wide street running at right angles to the line of our advance. Down it the enemy poured a heavy musketry fire. I called out to my men to run across it, and did so myself, with a splendid young sergeant close behind. He is now Major Newland, on the retired list. No pluckier man ever followed his officer, and no man ever deserved his promotion better.

The colour-sergeant of my company was a fine-looking fellow, but destitute of all nerve or pluck. I never could find him when the bullets were in full chorus, so I displaced him immediately after we had relieved Lucknow. Of course, he had come to us "from another regiment": that is a true article of regimental belief in all corps as regards objectionable officers or useless sergeants or privates.

As I ran over this open street where it joined that we were advancing along, I went as fast as I could, with Sergeant Newland close behind me. I turned to see how my men were coming on when I reached the far side, and found Sergeant Newland with his hand on his mouth,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

from which he was bleeding freely. When he removed his hand, I saw that a bullet had cut away and mangled his upper lip horribly. Of course he was thus lost to me for the rest of the operations, and a great loss he was. Where the village ends, the road ran into a sort of deep cutting in which one was well sheltered ; but the highly walled-in Sekunder Bagh was on our right, and from it a heavy fire was poured upon any one who showed over the sloping side of the road. In a short time way was made along the road behind us for a heavy gun. When it reached me, the question was how to get it out of this deep, hollow road to the level of the ground on which stood the walls of the Sekunder Bagh. It could only be done by hand, so we all buckled to, and with hand ropes, and by dint of spoking at the wheels, we at last got it where it came into action. But it cost us much in men's lives to do so. The enemy's bullets peppered us sorely, and seemed to hammer the iron tyre of the wheel I was working at. It is astonishing how any one lived through the heavy fire poured in upon us at such very close range during this trying operation. However, my men lying down along the bank with their heads only exposed when they had loaded and were ready to fire, did much to keep down the enemy's fire, for I don't think we were over eighty yards from the corner tower of the place when we hauled the gun into action. The gun opened fire at once, sending great clouds of dust into the air when at each round its heavy shot struck the wall. Close behind me were the 93rd Highlanders, and as soon as the gun had made a sufficiently big hole in the wall, they went gallantly for it, whilst Wylde, with his magnificent regiment of Sikhs, went for the only gateway into the place and quickly burst it open.

There was a very narrow staircase on each side of the



## BLOUNT'S TROOP OF HORSE ARTILLERY

arched gateway leading to an upper story, well packed with the enemy. Without a moment's hesitation the Sikhs mounted these winding corkscrew-like stairs, and in a few minutes were amidst the enemy, cutting them up with their tulwars and hurling others out of the open windows. Few British soldiers would have done this, and yet their loss was small. They knew their enemy's habits and mode of thought better than we did. However, no matter what they knew, it was a splendid illustration of the pluck and daring of the Punjaub soldiers. Major Wylde, certainly one of the bravest of men, was himself either killed or badly wounded in this affair.

Blount's troop of Bengal Horse Artillery now came up the lane of the village by which we had marched, and having struggled up its steep bank to the level of the ground surrounding the Sekunder Bagh, it galloped past that building, unlimbered, and came into action against the Shah Najif. I never saw anything prettier or more gallantly done in action.

As we looked from the Sekunder Bagh towards the Residency, this Shah Najif mosque, with its massive white dome, was to our right front, and not more than about six or seven hundred yards from us, whilst immediately in our front were the ruins of some mud-built sepoy lines. Our brigadier, Adrian Hope, now told me to advance my company at the double and occupy these ruined huts, as the enemy's skirmishers had already begun to annoy the men of Blount's battery from them. At that time my men were lying along the main road that led from the Sekunder Bagh to the barracks, and were thus covering the left of Blount's battery, then engaged with the sepoys in front. I did as I was told, and we advanced at a quick pace—

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

much faster than our regulation double. I was glad when doing so to hold on by Adrian Hope's stirrup leather, as he trotted forward. A gallant, daring soul and a most rising soldier, he was killed soon afterwards in trying to accomplish what was impossible, but what the arrogant presumption of an ignorant, over-bearing superior—styled a general—had ordered him to undertake. I soon had my men under cover amidst the walls and ruins of the old native lines. But I found that I required cover from the rear quite as much as from the front, as a large proportion of Blount's shells, fired from our right rear, burst at the muzzle through the badness of their fuses,<sup>1</sup> and sent their splinters and their bullets amongst us. Alas, I then lost a great friend, Major Barnston, from this cause. He was one of the very best soldiers I ever knew in the Army.

Sir Colin Campbell had ordered him to take his scratch battalion forward—minus my company sent on another mission, as I have just described—and strive to get into the Shah Najif mosque, which I have already said stood on the right of the road into the city. His orders were, "If you cannot force your way in, get your men under cover near it, and come back and tell me what you have done and seen."

He did as he was ordered, but every available point of ingress that he could get at was built up. He tried in vain to force an entrance, but could not do so. Having therefore placed his men in the best shelter he could find, he galloped back and told Sir Colin what he had done. Sir Colin said, "Very well, keep your men there for the present and I will reinforce you." Barnston turned his horse and started to

<sup>1</sup> Fuse composition deteriorates quickly in India, or at least it did so at the time to which I refer.

## MAJOR BARNSTON MORTALLY WOUNDED

gallop back to his men, when another of those thrice accursed shells from Blount's battery burst at the muzzle, and a great piece of it struck my comrade in the thigh.

The Shah Najif fell into our possession towards evening, after it had been for a considerable time subjected to such a bombardment from Captain Peel's naval guns, and from other heavy pieces worked by the Royal Artillery, that the native garrison could no longer remain in it.

When the day's work was over, we were ordered to retire and bivouac under the high walls of the Sekunder Bagh. As soon as I had piled arms, I went inside to try and find my comrade Barnston, as I was told the wounded had been sent there. This was a mistake, but I was glad I went in, for I never before had seen the dead piled up, one above the other in tiers, in order to clear a passage through a mass of slain. Such was the case in the archway leading into that awful charnel-house where lay the bodies of some 2,000 unfaithful sepoys. As soon as I entered the garden I was fired at by some of the enemy in one of the corner towers of the building, and having ascertained that none of our wounded were in the place I returned to my bivouac with a saddened heart at having failed to find my chum, Major Barnston. Later on I found him. He was quite cheery but said he was cold, so I gave him my overcoat. We parted, and my heart was sore indeed, for I knew from personal experience how dangerous big wounds in India always are. I never saw him again. He was taken to Cawnpore, and during the morning of the day he died, as I was afterwards told, he received a letter from me, which was read to him, at which he was much pleased, and he was greatly interested with the military news it contained. The remembrance of that fact has always been a satisfaction to me. In common with all his comrades, I deeply felt his

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

death, and we all realized that England had lost in him a soldier of very great promise indeed : a man who possessed all the qualities and qualifications required by a leader in war.

I had a cold bivouac that night in a thin silk jacket without a greatcoat. When I sat up the next morning, I smelt something burning, and upon looking at the high wall of the Sekunder Bagh immediately above me, I saw the dead body of a sepoy lying across it, and partly hanging over its edge. He was dressed in a cotton-padded sort of greatcoat, which had caught fire and was slowly burning : the smell of his frizzling flesh was not very refreshing in that early morning hour. At the same time some Sikh soldiers made their appearance upon the same part of the wall. They called to some three or four of the enemy who had spent the night in a corner tower, ordering them to come out. The evening before, long after the fighting there was over, these men had kept up a fire upon all who entered the garden and had wounded several of our men. They came out, looking meek, for I presume they had had no food or water for many hours. The Sikhs made them kneel down, and having asked them many questions that I could not catch killed them with their tulwars. Months afterwards whilst relating the fate of these men to Augustus Anson, then A.D.C. to Sir Hope Grant, he said that not long after the fighting had ceased for the day he was sent with a message. Believing that the person for whom it was intended might be found in the Sekunder Bagh, he rode into it through the big gate. There was a little desultory firing still going on between some Highlanders and the sepoys in the towers. His attention was attracted to a Highlander who at that moment was stalking some one amongst the orange trees inside the place. He saw him go

## A WOMAN SHOT IN A TREE

down on his knees, take steady aim, fire, and then heard some one fall from the tree aimed at. To his horror, and to that of the Highlander's also, they found it was an old woman who, Anson afterwards discovered, had been put up there a short time before by a humane officer who wished to get her out of danger. The poor Highlander was very much put out, but said he had been already fired upon several times by some one in that direction, and thought the bullets had come from a man in that tree.

Before my company advanced the next morning—Tuesday, November 17—two very long and deep trenches were dug on the side of the road that led into Lucknow, and in them the enemy's dead were placed crossways. Some one kept a tally of the total number buried in them, and I was told at the time that it was the number of the year, 1857. I don't suppose that in modern times any such great number of men killed in action on a very small space of ground, had ever been thus buried in two heaps. The two pits were nearly filled with the dead, and the excavated earth was heaped over them.

Our pouches and artillery limbers had to be replenished, and we all wanted food, for we had had very little to eat during the previous day. This, and I presume other circumstances that I know not of, made us late in renewing our advance. We began by pressing back the enemy on our left so as to secure that flank of the columns on our right with which it was intended to attack seriously. The great point to be attacked that day was what had been the officers' Mess House of our 32nd Regiment—now the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry—which had long formed the most important part of the Lucknow garrison before the Mutiny. We knew it was surrounded by a masonry-reveted ditch having two

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

drawbridges over it, one towards us, the other towards the city. It stood on high ground in the middle of a large garden enclosed with kutchra, i.e. unbaked brick walls in a dilapidated condition, and both it and the garden were held in force by the enemy.

When Sir Colin had pounded it for a considerable time with all his available guns, he sent for me and made me quite a flattering little speech. He told me he had selected me for this attack, and described what he knew of the Mess House defences, as I have just described the place. He added, that if I found I could not take it, I was to place my men under cover and return myself to tell him what I had seen, etc. All he said conveyed to me the impression that he did not think we should succeed at our first onslaught. But I was in the seventh heaven of delight and extremely proud at being thus selected for what Sir Colin evidently deemed a difficult and a dangerous duty. I was pleased beyond measure with the kind expressions he used towards me—what children we all are, and how easily tickled by a great man's praise! What a lever it is for him to work with who knows how to use it deftly! But I confess that running then through the back of my brain was the unworthy suspicion that my company was to be employed upon a dangerous attempt which, although it might not succeed, might yet open the way for the Highlanders. We all suspected that he wished his despatch to announce that one of his old Crimean Highland Brigade regiments was the first to join hands with the besieged garrison. Was it not even possible that the Gordon Highlanders, who formed part of the garrison, should be ordered to make a sortie to meet the relieving army? How dramatic the story would then read in despatches of how the splendid Highlanders under the Scotch general Sir Colin Campbell, had,

## ASSAULT OF MESS HOUSE BY 90TH L.I.

with pipes playing, fought their way into Lucknow to relieve another distinguished Highland regiment that was closely besieged there ! Surely, bonfires would have blazed on every hill north of the Tweed in honour of such a national achievement !

Thoughts such as these were in my men's heads also. They may have been unworthy of the great, the splendid soldier to whom they applied. But after all, the conviction that inspired them sharpened the rowels of the spur which stimulated all ranks in my company at the moment, and made them determine that no breechesless Highlanders should get in front of them that day. I overheard many of them express that determination in very explicit Saxon English. They continued to be outspoken upon this point until, somewhat later in the day, they saw me in the big square of the Motec Mahul shake hands with Captain Tinling of our regiment, who with his company had just made a sortie from the besieged garrison in order to meet the relieving force as we approached. Thus, the first greetings between besieged and besieger were between two companies of my battalion, a circumstance all the regiment was proud of. But this fact was not recorded in any despatch. It is this intense feeling of regimental rivalry that is the life-blood of our old, historic Army, and makes it what it is in action. But some Scotch generals were at this time prone to magnify the noble deeds of Scotch battalions in a way that seriously irritated those from England and Ireland. Neither Sir Hope Grant nor Adrian Hope ever did so. Though both were ardent and proud Scotchmen they did ample justice to all soldiers, whether they came from the hills of Scotland, the banks of the Shannon, the mountains of Wales or the shires of England.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Having "front formed" my company, we started at a good steady double for the Mess House. I had with me my three subalterns, Carter, Herford and Haig, and close behind my company came that of Captain Irby, of my battalion. That old friend and best of comrades was, as usual, smiling and using strong language to all around him; with him was my good friend Dr., now Sir Robert Jackson, our regimental assistant surgeon. I steadied my men and "whipped them in" at the garden wall as we scrambled over it, and then made for the open doorway of the Mess House itself. It was a fine, strongly built square building, and as I reached the masonry-reveted ditch round it, I rejoiced to find the drawbridge down, and quite passable. It had suffered, however, from the heavy bombardment we had kept up so long upon the position generally, and it was broken at places. As I ran across it, no sepoy was to be seen anywhere! I ran to the corresponding door on the opposite side of the house, and could see the enemy as they scuttled quickly from the bullets some of my men were firing to help them on their way. The garden in that direction seemed fairly full of them. My bugler sounded the 90th call and the advance as we crossed the drawbridge, and I soon found my "pal," Captain Irby, with his company beside me: with them also came a number of the 53rd Regiment. No corps in India had a more deservedly high fighting reputation. It was mostly composed of reckless, dare-devil Irishmen, but at that time many of its company officers were middle-aged men who had been too long in India. An old captain of that regiment now came forward and wanted to find out from me whether he or I was the senior as a captain, and therefore in command of the place. I don't remember his name, though I do his face. I am afraid my answer was not couched in



## ASSAULT OF THE MESS HOUSE

very polite terms, and I saw no more of him for the rest of the day.

Some one in after years asserted that I claimed the honour of having hoisted a Union Jack upon this Mess House when we took it. My answer was, that it was taken by my company, immediately supported by Captain Irby's company, also of the 90th Light Infantry, but I did not know who the hero was that had hoisted a flag upon it : all I knew was, that it was not I who had done so, and that no flag was hoisted upon the Mess House whilst I was in it, and as to what took place after my company had gone through it to take the Motec Mahul, I could say nothing.

The enemy opened a heavy fire upon the house as soon as we got into it ; I had no orders as to what we should do if we succeeded in taking the place, so pointing to a very large and fine building to our left front I said to my good cheery comrade, Captain Irby—who laughed at everything—“ You go and take it, whilst I take the place to our right.” The building he took I knew well later on, as I lived in it for a couple of weeks after the final capture of Lucknow. It was called the “ Tara Kothce ” or “ House of the Stars,” as the Astronomer Royal of the Oudh Court lived there with his instruments. The building I selected to make for seemed an extensive place, but I did not know then that it was the Moti Mahul Palace, which joined the advanced position recently occupied by the headquarters of my own Battalion in the Chattah Munzil. Followed by my subalterns and men I got over the garden wall of the Mess House in the direction of the Residency. We were then in a broad road up which the enemy were firing pretty merrily from the Kaisar Bagh Palace and neighbouring buildings, so we passed it at a run to obtain shelter in a sort of open arcade-like place

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

outside the Moti Mahul Palace wall and close to the great gate into it. This "Motce Mahul" or "Pearl Palace" was surrounded by a thick masonry wall at least twenty feet in height, and was the home of the Begum. There stood a high detached wall, some fifteen yards in extent, in front of the entrance, so that although you could drive round this sort of outer "tambour," no matter where you stood you could not see into the courtyard within. The enemy had recently built up the two entrances round this tambour into the palace square, the fresh brickwork being well loopholed. In fact, they had thus provided that face of the palace with a good flanking defence. From its loopholes the enemy at once opened fire upon us. What was to be done? We could only stay where we were by taking forcible possession of those loopholes. When two hostile bodies are thus separated, it is naturally the pluckier of the two who maintains himself at the loopholes. In this instance the Pandeas soon gave up the question of ownership in our favour. But they occasionally contrived to sneak a shot through by crawling along the ground with a loaded musket, and inserting its muzzle suddenly into a loophole they managed somehow or other to pull the trigger on the chance of hitting some one. I had a few men wounded by this process, and was consequently anxious to dig a hole as quickly as possible through this newly constructed brickwork, whose freshly laid mortar was still soft. The old walls round the palace were too high and too solid to admit of our either climbing over, or of our burrowing under them. I called to those in rear to send me a few crowbars and pickaxes, and in a short time we saw men in the near distance coming with some. My old servant Andrews, seeing these men were going astray, ran into the open to put them right again, and as he did so he was laid low by a shot

## RELIEF OF LUCKNOW

from a loophole that, not being one of those looking down where my men were, I had not obtained possession of. I ran into the road where he fell, and getting my arms under him proceeded to drag him under cover. Whilst doing so, another shot, coming from a loophole not ten feet off—fired at me, I presume—went through him. I soon had him in a place of safety, and I think my old and valued friend, now Sir Robert Jackson, who was always in the thick of every fight, then one of our assistant surgeons, patched him up temporarily. But, poor fellow, he was never able to serve again, and died some years afterwards from this wound when serving in the Corps of Commissioners. A braver or more daring soldier I never knew. He was a pure Cockney.

The newly arrived tools were soon in use, and with them a hole was being rapidly made through the lately built loop-holed wall, when a civilian made his appearance. My first idea was that he had come out from the Residency. Asked who he was, he said he was Mr. Kavanagh who—as already mentioned—had recently joined us at the Alum Bagh from Sir James Outram, for the purpose of pointing out to Sir Colin Campbell the best road by which he could reach the Residency. He said he had lived so long in Lucknow that he knew well the locality we were in, and that if I would go with him he would show me a way round by which I could easily get into the Motee Mahul. I did so, but thought he did not know his way about as well as he had led me to suppose. At last he took me to another gate, but it was also built up. I consequently made my way back quickly to where I had left some of my men busily engaged in making a hole through the wall that shut us out from the great entrance. As I approached, I caught sight of the soles of a pair of boots and the lower part of a man's legs, the rest of

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

his body being through the small hole just made, which others were still working hard to enlarge. I asked who it was : "Ensign Haig " was the answer. I have seen many a reckless deed done in action, but I never knew of a more dare-devil exhibition of pluck than this was. In any other regiment this young ensign would have had the Victoria Cross, but to ask for that decoration was not the custom in the 90th Light Infantry.

The hole grew rapidly bigger, and one by one we crawled through it until the whole company were within the tam-bour. I took them at once into the open courtyard, round one side of which there were still stray knots of the enemy who fired at us from open doors and windows. As I marched along it, keeping close to the buildings, a man suddenly made a fierce cut at me with his tulwar which nearly shaved my head as I just managed to avoid it. They began to fire through small loopholes that had been pierced through the walls of the buildings in which they had taken refuge. I had several of these holes covered over with little baskets, so common in all native buildings, which well propped up from without by sticks prevented those inside from aiming well at us outside. We there killed many of the enemy, at which work we were busily employed when suddenly there was an explosion on the opposite, the western, side of the courtyard, and out of the cloud of dust and smoke that rose from it, there ran forward an officer and a number of British soldiers coming from Mr. Martin's house and the Residency direction. To the astonishment of us all, it was Captain Tinling of my regiment with his company behind him. They had sprung a mine to blow down the palace wall to enable them to make a sortie in order to meet our relieving force. We had both too much to do to squander time in commonplace talk, but

## THE GARRISON RELIEVED

to all ranks of those two companies the meeting was indeed a hearty one, and none of the survivors are likely to forget it.

Shortly afterwards there came out from the Residency the chivalrous Outram, and with him the stern Ironside, General Havelock, looking ill and worn.

In that square, where the two companies of my regiment, the relieved and the relievers, met, there shortly afterwards took place the celebrated meeting between Sir Colin Campbell and the two besieged generals. The well-known picture of that event shows the main gate by which my company forced its way in, and though there is a theatrical air about the picture, which represents every one looking clean and tidy, which none of us certainly did look, the main features of that remarkable and historic event are well represented on the canvas.

Whilst in this palace square, our Brigadier, Colonel Adrian Hope, took me aside and said, "I advise you to keep out of Sir Colin's way : he is furious with you for pushing on beyond the Mess House, for the capture of which his orders to you alone extended." "Rather hard on me," was my answer. However I was fully compensated for this unlooked-for injustice on the part of the Commander-in-Chief, by the extremely kind and flattering terms in which Adrian Hope spoke to me of what my company had achieved. I confess, however, that I felt much hurt by what he told me, though I fully understood the reason ; I had upset Sir Colin's little plan for the relief of Lucknow by the 93rd Highlanders.

Colonel Adrian Hope said, "Your men must be tired, take them back along the main road and halt upon it near the Shah Najif; they will be sure of having a quiet night there, and they want it."

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Rather sore, very sore indeed I may say, at what my Brigadier had told me, I marched my men off to the appointed spot, piled arms upon the side of the road, and all having had something to eat, we lay down there for a good night's rest. I don't know how long I had been in the land of dreams when I was roused by the angry voice of one of my subalterns, a charming man named Carter. As he was using strong language—and he could use strong expletives upon occasion—I inquired what the matter was : he said that some infernal son of a gun had put one of the legs of his charpoy—a native bed—right in the middle of his stomach. I tried to soothe him, and we were all soon once more soundly forgetful of life's miseries.

At the first streak of dawn I awoke and sat up, somewhat stiff, for I was cold, having no greatcoat. My eye lit upon the offending charpoy that Carter had condemned in strong words to the "old gentleman's" care during the previous night. Its occupant woke up at the same moment, and to my horror I saw it was Sir Colin. He also had come back to that quiet spot on the road for some sleep, and some one had found a charpoy for him. In placing it on the road, Sir Colin had accidentally planted one of its legs upon my subaltern Carter's stomach. The whole position under ordinary circumstances would have been intensely comical had it not been for what Adrian Hope had told me the evening before. Sir Colin saw me in a moment, and shaking his fist at me with a pleasant smile, he said, "If I had but caught you yesterday!" His anger had left him, and no man ever said nicer or more complimentary things to me than he did then. He ended our conversation by telling me I should have my promotion. He did not know that two years before I had already been promised it as soon as I should complete the

## WITHDRAWAL OF THE GARRISON

regulation period of six years' service required for that rank. What a lucky man I have always been in my relations with all the brave and gallant soldiers of every rank I have had to deal with in peace and in war, at home and abroad !

The next day all arrangements were made for our temporary withdrawal from Lucknow. The news from Cawnpore was very bad, for everything had gone wrong there. The mutinied Gwalior contingent had attacked the place, and had taken the city and the storehouses where Havelock's army had left their baggage ; had driven General Windham within his entrenchments, where everything was said to be in confusion ; in fact, a capable leader was urgently required there.

In addition to all this, Sir Colin was heavily encumbered with sick and wounded soldiers, and with the care of a crowd of about 500 British women and children of the Lucknow garrison. Until he had put all these in some place of safety he was as helpless for action as would be the giant over-weighted with chains.

A screened roadway was made from the Residency to the nearest of our outposts—which consisted of my company—near the breach in the Motee Mohul wall, through which Captain Tinling's company of my battalion had come to meet us, as already described. Behind this cover the women and children and the wounded were to be withdrawn. It was very desirable to keep from the enemy's knowledge as long as possible the fact that we were about to abandon Lucknow for the present. That object was most cleverly and successfully secured. It was a fine piece of staff work and management that did great credit to Sir Colin and to all the staff officers concerned.

Every one coming out of Lucknow had thus to pass through

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

my picket, so all my company had a good opportunity of seeing the women whom they had fought for—alas, too many of them were widows. Their faces bespoke privations, bad food and illness, and their careworn features told us not only of bodily suffering but of sorrow bravely endured. Amongst this long straggling crowd were widows and orphans left by gallant soldiers who had nobly died for England in the defence of the place. Let us hope that these helpless women and their children were all well provided for by the country for whom their husbands and their fathers had so gallantly fought. Many of the women were heavily laden with bundles, and some had large bags filled with rupees which weighed them down. Many upon finding themselves safe amongst the relieving army put down their babies and their parcels to converse with my men. But I had to remind them that although hidden from the enemy's view they had no protection there from his round shot. In fact, I had to hurry them along. They seemed too sad and down in their luck to manifest any joy at their escape. A very few drove in buggies drawn by attenuated horses. I did not see a happy or a contented or a smiling face amongst that crowd; not one of them said a gracious word to the soldiers who had saved them, a fact which my men remarked upon. Indeed, poor creatures, they did not make a favourable impression upon any of us, for they seemed cross; they certainly grumbled much at everything and everybody.

November 22, 1857, found me still on picket on the path we had opened out between the garrison and the relieving force. One incident struck me as illustrating the indifference to human life that war tends to engender. During that afternoon a captain of my battalion, who belonged to



## A GREAT EXPLOSION

the besieged garrison, marched out with his company in charge of the State prisoners. Upon reaching my post, he halted to count them as they went past to assure himself they were all there. As the last man of his company approached—he was well known as a good fighting soldier but not of irreproachable character—one prisoner was missing. My friend and comrade was dreadfully distressed, and called out to the soldier, “Where’s your prisoner?” The reply came at once, “We had great difficulty in getting him along, sir, and at last he stopped altogether and refused to go any further, so I was obliged to shoot him.”

To him the whole affair seemed a mere matter of no moment. I am afraid that warfare, especially of the nature we were then engaged in, tends much to blunt man’s best feelings, though it also develops the noblest man is capable of.

My company did not move off until all the garrison had passed out. Then the three *Transit* companies of the 10th Light Infantry marched silently away and rejoined our regimental headquarters after an absence from it of over seven months. When we had reached the Martiniere, I was ordered to halt and pile arms not far from a deserted battery of the enemy’s. It was now daylight, and most of us were soon asleep; I know I was. I was roused suddenly by something hitting me in the face, a small clod of earth I think, and upon jumping to my feet I saw a huge cloud of white smoke rising up from this battery. There was no explosion, so it must have been a quantity of loose powder that had been accidentally ignited by some careless smoker. A blackened object rushed madly from this smoke, and when in a few minutes afterwards I saw the poor fellow lying before me, he said he was Private Pierce—my plucky and faithful servant

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

who had behaved so well when we were shipwrecked. He had probably inhaled the flame, for his inside seemed to have been burned, and when I saw him some time later on—he was then unconscious—yellow pus was running from his mouth. He could not then say a word, and we never knew how this terrible accident occurred, for he died very soon.

Our retirement from Lucknow was carefully planned and admirably carried out by Sir Colin Campbell. General Havelock died whilst this retirement was being effected.

I have always believed from what I was told of General Havelock's advance upon Lucknow, that, gallant soldier and well experienced in Indian warfare though he was, he was worn out and debilitated from long and arduous service in India when the storm of the great Mutiny first swept over the Bengal Presidency. The son—a man of untiring energy and considerable ability, a real fighting soldier by nature—I knew intimately, as he served under me upon the staff in Canada, and I had also met him in India during the Mutiny. A more daring or a braver soul never existed. He thoroughly understood war in all its phases, and was well read in its science. Though at times eccentric, he was a grand fellow all round. He helped his father greatly during all the fighting between Cawnpore and Lucknow.

Sir Colin Campbell, having thus relieved the Lucknow garrison, moved back to the Alum Bagh on November 24. The serious condition of affairs at Cawnpore was at the moment the point of most urgent consideration, and demanded his immediate attention.

The Gwalior contingent of about 5,000 trained sepoys, joined by a large number of mutineers from the native army of Bengal and by a crowd of Budmashes from the surrounding districts, making in all a force of over 10,000 fighting men,

## WITH SIR JAMES OUTRAM

had hemmed in General Windham. His hastily constructed entrenchments were little more than a very weak *tête-de-pont* protecting the bridge of boats by which Havelock's force had crossed the Ganges on its way to Lucknow. It would be impossible to continue the war in Oudh unless Cawnpore was in our possession and our line of communications from it to Allahabad and Calcutta kept open. It was therefore of paramount importance that the Commander-in-Chief should hurry back in all haste to relieve General Windham. In fact, to make good our possession of Cawnpore and of its bridge of boats was the most pressing necessity of the moment. But Sir Colin resolved to leave General Sir James Outram with a division of British troops in camp near the Alum Bagh. This would be at least an outward evidence of our rule in a province largely composed of fanatical Mohammedans and of high-caste, English-hating Rajpoots and Brahmins, all accustomed to the use of arms from childhood. It would also so engage the attention of the native rulers of Oudh that they would not be likely to send help to the enemy at Cawnpore. As soon as Sir Colin could dispose of the Gwalior contingent, make Cawnpore safe, and re-establish order in its neighbourhood, it was Lord Canning's intention that he should return to the Alum Bagh for the purpose of finally taking and permanently occupying Lucknow. I explain this further on.

On November 27 Sir Colin started for Cawnpore, taking all the sick and wounded, all the women and children brought out of the Residency, and his siege train with him. None of us outsiders had any conception of the very critical position Cawnpore was in at the moment. We subsequently learnt from Sir James Outram that Sir Colin had arrived just in time to save the Cawnpore position, but he

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

did not tell us that Sir Colin had found everything and everybody at sixes and sevens, like a beaten army, within the place. Having engaged and heavily defeated the enemy, he then proceeded to clear them from the Doab between the Ganges and the Jumna rivers. This he did effectually, and at once began to collect the army that subsequently enabled him to do the same in Oudh also.

After Sir Colin Campbell's relief of Lucknow, many wished him to push his success further and take final possession of the place, but he wisely decided otherwise. Although not yet fully aware of the critical position into which General Windham had fallen at Cawnpore, he knew enough to make him anxious for the safety of that city, then the most important link in his line of communications. For no moment did he pay heed to this advice which some then pressed upon him. He would have none of it. But he had taken much trouble to make the enemy believe he meant to follow it, and that a general assault of the city was imminent. To further impress this belief upon the Lucknow people, he opened fire upon the Kaiser Bagh on November 20, 1857, breaching its walls in three places, and, as it was then believed, killing many of its garrison. It was to him an anxious time. In his despatch upon the relief of the besieged garrison, he says that during November 20, 21, and 22, 1857, the long line he held extended from the Lucknow Residency to the Dil Khoosha Palace, and that during those days his army was but one great outlying picket, of which every man was always on duty. To this statement I can add, from what I felt and saw, that every man, from the general to the bugler, was on his mettle, and had the fullest confidence in their commander.

To have conveyed the 500 women and children, the

## WITHDRAWAL FROM LUCKNOW

1,000 sick and wounded, safely away, without a hitch, and without any attack being made upon them, was, I think, the best piece of staff work I have ever seen. The garrison withdrew through my picket at midnight on November 22, the whole operations being carried out by the brigadier-general, the Hon. Adrian Hope, one of the most rising men then in our Army. So completely were the enemy taken in, that next morning they opened fire as usual upon the buildings we had held during the siege, and for some hours did not discover that we had vacated them.

This Sir Colin Campbell effected in the face of an enemy many times more numerous than the force he commanded. It was a great military achievement, and reflected the utmost credit upon all concerned. He had vindicated our national honour by what he had done, and rightly felt he must place these soldiers' families and his wounded in a place of safety before he undertook any new venture.

When he had crossed the Ganges in November, 1857, to relieve the Lucknow garrison, he left Sir Charles Windham at Cawnpore with a small garrison of British soldiers, subsequently made up to a force of about 2,000 fighting men. Cawnpore was then a position of the first importance to us, and where we had constructed a good bridge of boats over the Ganges, by which we communicated with the Alum Bagh. In fact, Cawnpore was the link which joined Oudh to our old Indian provinces, and through which our reinforcements from Calcutta reached us. Benares, Allahabad, and Cawnpore were the three important garrisons that joined the army in Oudh to our base on the river Hooghley.

As a friend and companion I liked General Windham much when I came to know him well in Canada. A man

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

of the world, he had many charming qualities : was never hard upon others in word or deed, and always inclined to make allowances for human failings. But when in command of the column that assaulted the Redan, he had been unfortunate as I have already mentioned in a previous chapter. He had this other chance afforded him at Cawnpore two years later, and he was again unfortunate. But it must be admitted that he had an extremely difficult game to play at Cawnpore, having not only to defend his weak entrenchments, but also to keep an enemy overwhelmingly superior in numbers at a sufficient distance to prevent them from destroying the boat bridge over the Ganges there. The Gwalior contingent, a large and fairly well drilled native force, and furnished with field and heavy artillery, had mutinied and moved down upon him in a body. Driven back to his entrenchments, the position was only saved by the timely arrival of Sir Colin and the force with which he had just relieved Lucknow. I cannot help adding, however, that in my opinion Sir Colin might have finished his work at Lucknow and reached Cawnpore two days earlier. Had he done so, General Windham's abandonment of his camp and the retreat within his entrenchments would have been avoided.

## CHAPTER XXI

### With Sir James Outram at the Alum Bagh

**I**T had long been customary with the great Oudh zameendars to keep on foot considerable bodies of well armed feudal sepoy, undisciplined according to our notions, but good fighters and loyal to their chiefs. Most of those great landowners lived in considerable state in their well-built forts, some of them well provided with guns, and all of considerable size and importance. For the previous half century or more they had lived at constant war with one another, and thus both the use of arms and the practice of war on a small scale were common to all classes in the Province. The Commander-in-Chief determined therefore to leave for the present a weak Division under Sir James Outram encamped near the Alum Bagh to represent British rule in Oudh, until he could return, when he had disposed of the Gwalior contingent then attacking Cawnpore. Apart from the fact that Sir James Outram was one of our very best generals, his intimate knowledge of Oudh and of its affairs, of its chiefs and their history, eminently qualified him for that important command. My battalion, now the Scottish Rifles, formed part of that Division.

The position he took up was astride the Cawnpore Road, about a mile south of the Alum Bagh and two miles from the suburbs of Lucknow city. The right rested upon the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

fort and neighbouring jeels of Jellahabad ; the left was in the open, but protected by the villages, which, within a 2,000 yards' radius of our left flank had been placed in a state of defence. For a dead level country it possessed some elements of defensive strength, and it was above all things a defiant challenge to the very numerous enemy in front and all round to come and attack us if they dared.

Sir James Outram's Division consisted of over 200 Military Train, then being converted into cavalry, and a few Volunteers (British) also mounted. The British battalions were of the Northumberland Fusiliers, of the Gordon Highlanders, of the Seaforth Highlanders, of the York and Lancaster, of the Scottish Rifles, and of the Madras Fusiliers ; there were two native battalions, Brazier's Sikhs, and a Madras native infantry regiment. The Division was divided into two Brigades, both of which were commanded by absolutely incompetent men. They were the two senior colonels in the Division, and in those days no other qualifications were required. They were both gallant gentlemen who would ride straight for their enemy whenever he presented himself, but it was a parody upon sense to call them generals, for neither had any knowledge of the science or the art of war. We are still an extraordinary nation as regards our military system, but we were then even much worse. The grand total of the Division was 3,395 English, and 1,047 natives. All were seasoned to fighting and all were the survival of the fittest, the weaker having already succumbed to disease, or being still in or on their way to the hospitals at Cawnpore.

Our *Transit* detachment of three companies was now to rejoin our battalion headquarters. Our late Brigadier,



## OLPHERTS AND MAUDE

Adrian Hope, under whom it was a real pleasure to serve, came to our bivouac to bid us good-bye. He made us a little speech, thanking all ranks in most graceful words for their gallant services. We thoroughly appreciated such praise from so loveable, so brilliant a leader. Alas, my great friend Barnston, by far the best officer of any rank in Colonel Hope's brigade, was not there to hear him: he died of his wounds soon after, and without doubt he went to the bright abode that is surely reserved for all good soldiers who die in action, and where the daring Hope, the young brigadier we all esteemed so highly, was so soon to follow him. Our detachment gave our late Brigadier three hearty cheers as he rode away: we were never to see him again in this world. He fell fighting nobly soon afterwards.

There were two batteries of field artillery in this Division, both commanded by remarkable men. One by Captain Olpherts—invariably called to the day of his death Billy Olpherts—the other by a clever fellow named Maude. Both were as brave as God ever creates brave men, and they vied with one another in deeds of reckless daring. In this splendid quality there was no choosing between them. But Billy Olpherts—an Irishman all over—appealed most to the affection of every one who was privileged to know him well. Whenever he lost men he generally came to my battalion for others to replace them, and so popular was he in it, where he was well known, that he always found fine reckless spirits anxious to join him. The above-mentioned Battalion of our then newly invented Military Train, which had been diverted from China for service during this Mutiny, was a valuable military asset. Though not suited by figure or

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

length of leg to be cavalry soldiers, they were white men and were being rapidly converted into useful soldiers on horseback, under an officer of the 9th Lancers.

Altogether, notwithstanding its drawbacks in the shape of Brigadiers, it was a splendid fighting division of seasoned veterans, all ranks thoroughly imbued with the fullest confidence in their able General, the daring fighter, the practical administrator, and the generous comrade of all soldiers, Sir James Outram. Of the many leaders I have served under, he possessed the affection and the confidence of all ranks more than any other. Over me he exercised a great, an enduring spell. I did not know him well personally: I worshipped him at a distance. His manner both with men and officers was most captivating, and if any General more than another deserves the special gratitude of his country for great services rendered in Oudh during the Mutiny, I hope I am not presumptuous in saying that I would certainly give the palm to Sir James Outram. And here perhaps I may describe his character as I learnt it from others, and as I judged it myself at the time and still continue to estimate it. Upon each and all of us he made a deep impression. Out generally at daybreak, I can see him in my mind's eye now as he walked up to my outlying picket, his horse led behind him, with the invariable cheroot in his mouth, and a cheery "Good morning" to all around him. If a kossid had lately arrived with any news, he would usually read it out to the men, who thoroughly appreciated his familiar kindness with them. His presence anywhere made others bold and daring, and seemed in an unaccountable way to stiffen the weak knees of the poor in spirit. The very coward took heart to follow him into danger. There was something magnetic about his high

## SIR JAMES OUTRAM

courage that inspired general confidence. One forgot one's own self in admiration of his determined bearing, and at all times and under all circumstances you recognized the superiority of his manly iron nerve. I was always told by those who knew him far better than I did, that his chivalrous sympathy for those in trouble was on a par with his heroism. He laughed at danger and mocked at difficulties. A keen sportsman in every sense, he excelled in manly exercises. Few Indian officials knew the native character as thoroughly as he did. This insight into their thought and mode of reasoning enabled him to foresee what they would do under specified conditions and circumstances. In this innate faculty lay much of the influence he exercised over them and through which he inspired them with confidence in his justice. Styled the "Bayard of India" by another great soldier as brave as he was and perhaps blessed with a more brilliant genius, his name will be long remembered by the descendants of the wild native tribes he ruled so wisely. It will never be forgotten by our soldiers who knew him in Oudh as long as manly daring and fidelity to duty is held in honour by our race. Our men repaid his kindness and geniality by a real reverence and a sincere affection. In January, 1858, Sir James Outram said that according to the best information obtainable, the number of the enemy then near his position at the Alum Bagh was over 100,000 fighting men. This estimate, of course, included many thousands of Lucknow budmashes, the armed and turbulent scum of a fighting and factious population.<sup>1</sup>

Life at Alum Bagh camp was monotonous, but by no

<sup>1</sup> I take this estimate from a published dispatch of Sir James Outram, dated February 28, 1858.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

means dull. The want of books was felt most, far more than the want of wine or other luxuries. Of course we had races, for where is it that two or three Englishmen are ever gathered together for any length of time without a race meeting? We had sports also, in both of which amusements the men took great interest, and I have no doubt backed their favourites freely, for at that time our men were "full of money." They had not had any other opportunity of spending their pay for a long while. Then we occasionally had false alarms, those most worrying of all incidents in a campaign, to occupy us. The regimental bazaars were always rife with startling rumours, and we only wanted a halfpenny "daily" to cheer the imagination on to further developments in that line.

Our picket duty was heavy, and done, at least in my battalion, by companies, the true system, the only possibly good system on active service. I rather enjoyed this work, although it kept me out of bed for the night, and often meant a great deal of walking round my line of sentries to see that all were on the alert and no enemy near at hand.

Either one or two days before Christmas, 1857, my company was on outlying picket in a village about a mile in front of our camp, when the following curious incident occurred. I have already mentioned a Major McIntyre, of the Gordon Highlanders, who had, as I thought unfairly, put me and some brother officers under arrest when we were under his command in the Alum Bagh Palace. I was consequently prejudiced against him and always avoided him. Upon the occasion I now refer to he had, as field officer of the day, all the outposts under his command during his twenty-four hours' tour of duty. We had had a quiet night, and as day was breaking the following morning I

## A SPLENDID SHOT

clambered to the flat roof of the biggest house in the village to have a good look-out all round, and Major McIntyre quickly followed me there. The mutineers in front were playing our ordinary reveillé on their drums and fifes as they had learnt it in their regiments. A sentry stood between me and McIntyre, and we all three peered earnestly into the twilight towards the enemy's position. Just then two wild geese flew over at about duck-shot range from us. Quick as lightning this major snatched the sentry's rifle and fired. One of the geese fell not far in front of us. Had he not been known well as a first rate shot I should have looked upon this as a mere "fluke," but in his case one could not think so. Quite involuntarily on my part I exclaimed, "Well done, a splendid shot."

I was soon relieved and marched my men back to camp. In the afternoon a native servant came to my tent with a note, a bottle of port wine, and this wild goose. The note was very civil, asking me to accept the goose for my Christmas dinner the day following, and hoping I would wash it down with the bottle of wine he ventured to send me. So ended my enmity with this old major. He had entered the Army when I was still in swaddling clothes.

I rode a great deal for exercise every day, and there were some jeels about where my old chum Irby, an unerring shot, managed often to pick up a few wild duck. He had a curious soldier servant whom he had trained as a retriever, and no matter how deep the water where a duck fell, he quickly brought it to his master.

General Outram's spies frequently brought news of intended attacks upon our position, and once or twice the enemy made some show in that direction, though they usually preferred to keep at a respectful distance from us.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Our general was not a man to be caught napping, and long experience of natives enabled him to foresee their intentions and to thwart their plans. Every evening they enlivened us with their old regimental bands at tattoo, and it was amusing to listen to the old familiar airs they played. Upon more than one occasion some of the more adventurous and fanatical sepoys actually came close up to our outposts ; but our rifle fire was not to their taste. One of these attacks was headed by a fellow dressed up as a Hunnoman, the Hindoo Monkey God. He was encountered by Brazier's Sikhs, and although almost riddled with bullets, one of which took out both his eyes, he was not killed. The Sikhs kept him afterwards as a sort of sacred Joss, and treated him most kindly.

Major Olpherts, whom I have already mentioned, was an intimate friend of all the officers of my battalion. Danger, I believe, amused as well as interested him. His battery was a sort of military curiosity in every way. His gun-carriages were old and always on the verge of absolute dissolution, and as for his harness, it seemed to be tied together with pieces of string. The battery had gone into Lucknow with General Havelock, and was in every sense a scratch lot. But the heart of every man belonging to it was stout indeed, all ranks taking their tone from their gallant dare-devil captain. I knew him well up to the time of his death, only a short while ago, and I am proud to remember that he always regarded me as a real friend and comrade.

One day there was more than usual semblance of a serious attack upon us. Our bugles had suddenly sounded the "Assembly," and I was soon busily employed inspecting my men on their "private parade." I heard the galloping

## BILLY OLPHERT'S BATTERY

of horses near me, and upon looking round saw it was Olphert's battery going as fast as their wretched equipment would admit of. First came dear old Billy himself, clad in garments he had used in the Crimean War, a fez cap and a Turkish grégo, the latter tied round his waist with a piece of rope. About fifty yards behind came his well-known battery sergeant-major in a sort of shooting coat made from the green baize of a billiard table ; then a gun, every driver flogging as hard as he could ; then another at a long distance in rear. One broke down, to the unpractised eye hopelessly, immediately in front of my company. Some of the spokes had gone : they all rattled. We were all highly amused and interested, for many men in the battery belonged to the 60th Light Infantry. What would the smart young major of horse artillery at Woolwich have thought of such a battery ? I laugh even now as I recall its appearance on parade, but as I think of the great services it rendered at a very trying time during the Mutiny, and wherever they were required, I am proud to have served in the same division with it, and to have been the friend of the splendid soldier who commanded it. Would that he were alive to read these pages : I wonder if there be a lending library in heaven.

## CHAPTER XXII

### The Siege and Capture of Lucknow, 1858

THE Governor-General can dictate to the Commander-in-Chief the general line of policy to be adopted in any war, but Lord Canning was wise enough to interfere very little in the military plans adopted in 1857-8 for what really constituted the re-conquest of India.

The relief of the Lucknow garrison being effected and the serious attack of the Gwalior contingent upon Cawnpore having been repulsed with loss, the great question was, in what direction could our military forces be now used to the best advantage? Our new ally, Jung Bahadoor, at that time a somewhat "doubtful quantity" in our military calculations, was to be in Soogowlee in our territory about December 21, 1857, marching upon Goruckpoor. The question was in what direction should he be ordered to advance? Westward to Fyzabad, or south by Azingweh and Jaunpore across the Ganges and Jumna into Bundelcund? In other words, which should have priority in our plans, the reconquest of Oudh or the restoration of law and order in our old provinces of Rohilkund, the Doab and Bundelcund? It was more a matter of policy to be decided by the Governor-General than a military point for the Commander-in-Chief's decision. Sir Colin Campbell was in favour of the first plan, but very properly referred the matter to Lord Canning. His decision was that the



## SIR COLIN CAMPBELL

complete re-establishment of our sovereignty in Oudh should have precedence over all other proposed schemes at that moment. He gave his reasons for thinking so, and I think they were unanswerable. A rival power to ours had been set up in Oudh, and at the moment every eye in India was fixed upon that kingdom. Our proceedings there had consequently become more important in native opinion than any measure we might adopt for the re-establishment of law and order in our older districts.

With that loyalty to those in authority over him which was one of Colin Campbell's strong characteristics, he at once accepted Lord Canning's decision without demur, and threw himself heart and soul into the operations necessary to give it effect.

On February 27, 1858, Sir Colin Campbell rode into the Alum Bagh Camp to have an interview with Sir James Outram. He had just encamped within a few miles from us, with what was for India in those days a big regular army of over 3,000 sabres and nearly 12,500 bayonets, and with a large number of heavy guns and several batteries of horse and field artillery. Jung Bahadoor's and Brigadier General Frank's column were daily expected, and upon their arrival it was hoped we should have an army with a total strength of about 30,000 men and 164 guns of all sorts available for the capture of Lucknow.

For Sir Colin every man of our army in Oudh had a good word to say. Every inch a soldier, he had a sincere sympathy with all men who worked hard under him. The bravest of men, he liked brave soldiers, and they knew that he did so. All ranks were proud to serve under him, though men not born north of the Tweed felt they were somewhat handicapped when he estimated the respective

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

merits of the troops under his command. He was essentially a man of strong prejudices, fond of having the well born round him, but having little belief in those who had not had, like himself, considerable Indian experience. He seemed, as far as I could judge, to be somewhat prejudiced against those who had served on the staff in the Crimea. Colonel Pakenham, afterwards Lord Longford, had there proved himself to be a very able staff officer, but had never served before in India. Colonel Wetherall was certainly one of our very best and most rising officers in the Crimea, where all who knew him well trusted and thought highly of him. But he too had never served in India. Lord Clyde employed both of these colonels when they arrived in Calcutta, both being, I believe, strongly recommended to him by H.R.H. the Duke of Cambridge, but he did not make that use of them as, according to my estimate of their military value, they deserved and were entitled to expect.

General Sir William Mansfield, his chief of the staff, was possessed of a rare ability that would have placed him high in any non-military walk of life. His was a cold, calculating and logical brain of rare quality, and he was doubtless of much use to his master. The minutes in which he conveyed that master's instructions to his generals in the field are fine samples of clearness and perspicuity. But I think I may say that no one liked him, indeed many averred not even Lord Clyde. Numbers hated him as supercilious and inclined to presume upon the acknowledged fact of his great general ability. He was so short-sighted that he was of but little use in the field as a leader. Personally, I knew him but slightly, but the little I had to do with him impressed me much against him.

## STRENGTH OF THE ENEMY

The task before Sir Colin in the winter of 1858-9—difficult in many respects—was rendered particularly so from the fact that fully ten battalions of British infantry, one of British cavalry, much of the Bengal artillery, and many of the Punjaub regiments had already become very weak in numbers and were fairly worn out by long marches and constant fighting since the Mutiny had burst upon us. England had sent India all the battalions she could spare from home and from her foreign possessions. She had few more to give, and we had not then had a Mr. Cardwell to provide us with an Army Reserve such as that which recently enabled us, after several long campaigns, to bring the Boer War to an end.

Whilst Sir James Outram occupied the Alum Bagh position between the Relief of Lucknow in November, 1857, and the return of Sir Colin Campbell in the beginning of March, 1858, the enemy had almost encircled Lucknow with a double line of substantial works, of which the Kaiser Bagh Palace was the citadel. It was said by those esteemed the wisest in all such calculations, that its defending army consisted of some 30,000 of our own disloyal Sepoys, and of at least 60,000 Oudh men besides, who had been accustomed from boyhood to carry arms.<sup>1</sup> Those hostile forces were amply supplied with guns, and the followers of the Prophet and the believers in Vishnu now joined cordially in what I may call a great effort to free Hindostan for ever of the unclean English who had ruled them for just a century.

The first move in our new game was necessarily the capture and final occupation of Lucknow. The plan for

<sup>1</sup> Many estimated the enemy opposed to us at a much higher figure.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

what is commonly known as the "Siege of Lucknow" was ably conceived. Its principal feature was, that a considerable force should be thrown across the Goomtee River below the city and take up a position to enable its guns to enfilade and take in reverse the enemy's lately constructed works. Both General Havelock and Sir Colin Campbell had forced their way into Lucknow from the east, and the enemy had consequently assumed that our next attack would be delivered from the same direction. It was not therefore expected that we should find any large fortifications on the north bank of the Goomtee.

As Jung Bahadur had promised, he sent a Nepaulese division to co-operate in the taking of Lucknow. It numbered about 9,000 men, which brought up the force employed to the expected total of nearly 30,000, of which about 3,000 were cavalry, British and Native, and 10,000 were British infantry.

Almost all the British battalions in Sir Colin's army had recently arrived from home, and their smart clothing contrasted forcibly with the many-coloured "rags" of the troops in Outram's division of veterans.

It soon became bruited abroad that in the organization of the new army the 90th Light Infantry was no longer to be in Sir James Outram's division. This was sad news for all of us, for in his skill we trusted implicitly, and to him all ranks were personally and sincerely attached. We had at the time good reason to believe that he asked to have our battalion in his division, a fact which pleased us much, but it was not to be. The common "camp-shave" at the moment was, that Sir Colin was for some reason or other jealous of Outram and of his popularity with all those under him. But if this were so, Sir Colin certainly did not show

## THE KAISER BAGH

it in his dispositions for the capture of Lucknow, as he gave Outram command of the strong force he pushed across the Goomtee to attack the city from the north, the most important factor in his plan of operations. But if thus disappointed, all ranks of the *Transit's* three companies rejoiced to find themselves once more in Adrian Hope's Brigade. The other battalions in the brigade were the "Black Watch," the 93rd Highlanders, and a Punjaub regiment.

I shall make no attempt to describe the movements that ended in the capture of Lucknow by Sir Colin Campbell. The plan of operations bespoke a master's hand, and that plan was admirably carried out by his subordinate commanders. I content myself with a reference to the force I belonged to.

We started in the evening of March 7, 1858, for the Dil Khoosha Palace, where we halted the following day. The day after, March 9, we occupied the Martiniere, the enemy offering very little resistance, although they had erected a considerable amount of field works about it. By March 14 I may say Lucknow was in our possession without any very serious fighting. My battalion had marched into the Kaiser Bagh, a very fine palace with beautiful gardens. There, in front of the main building, was a canal with marble sides and a very handsomely carved marble bridge over it. The imposing and beautiful marble throne which is now in the King's garden at Windsor Castle stood near it. The effect was good, and the first view of the palace impressed me much with its lavish Eastern magnificence. There was a great deal of loot about, but throughout my soldiering career I have never been a looter. Not from any squeamish notions as to the iniquity of the game, for I

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

believe that, as a rule, to the victor should belong the spoils of war, but in the interests of order and of discipline. It is destruction to all that is best in the military training of the British Army for the officer to pillage alongside the private and possibly to dispute with him for the ownership of some valuable prize. But I know that others were richer by many pearls and much jewellery when they quitted than when they entered the Kaiser Bagh. I selected a nice open colonnade as my company's quarters for the coming night. Several doors opened into it, but they were locked. One door was soon kicked open—what is it that the “ammunition boot” will not kick open? The room inside was small and contained numerous chests. Some contained nothing but buckskin breeches, others top-boots, and some Highland and other British uniforms, all being old-fashioned in shape but evidently unused. We also found a photograph of the King of Oudh taken in a kilt and a Highland feather bonnet. It was curious, but not pretty. The fighting seemed over, so I strolled into an adjoining square where the headquarters of most of our companies were. One officer had a pile of Cashmere shawls, of which he gave me my choice of one to sleep on for the night. I took it back and laid it carefully on the ground in the colonnade where I rejoined my men. We managed to cook some food, but long before we could digest it the enemy made a faint-hearted attack upon us “all along the line.” I had to go into a small mosque with tall minarets near at hand, whence we inflicted some loss upon the enemy. When everything quietened down again I returned to my colonnade, but my shawl was gone! Some one passing by, regarding it as a derelict, had “jumped it”—that is the looter's mild technical synonym for the ugly sounding

## NUNC FORTUNATUS SUM

word "stole"! And so I lost my one piece of loot, and that had been given to me.

I have no hesitation in saying that the loot secured by the rank and file of our army in Lucknow at that time was very injurious to its military efficiency and affected its discipline for a considerable time afterwards.

A clever man in imitation of Caesar's "*Veni, vidi, vici*," had described Sir Charles Napier's conquest of Scind in the one word "*Peccavi*." It was superior in wit to the Roman's alliterative description of his success, as Napier was commonly supposed to have sinned much in his attack upon the Ameers and by his annexation of their province. A witty friend of mine, Major the Hon. James Dormer, who was A.D.C. to Sir Colin Campbell, wrote as if from his general to describe his capture of Lucknow, "*Nunc fortunatus sum*."<sup>1</sup> If not as elegant as Caesar's three words, nor as witty as Napier's supposed despatch, it passed muster in our camp, and amused many at a time when even a small joke was thankfully received.

<sup>1</sup> "I am in luck-now."

## CHAPTER XXIII

### On the Staff of the Oudh Division, 1858

WITHIN a few days of these events Sir Colin Campbell selected me for staff employment, and appointed me Quarter-Master-General to Major-General Sir Hope Grant, who had just been given command of the Oudh division. I was extremely glad, not only at being given a position on the staff, but to be employed under so able and distinguished a general. Common report told me that he was one of the generals in whom Sir Colin Campbell had the most implicit confidence, and whom he had selected to command the Oudh division, then, I think, the most important division in India.

Sir Hope Grant was then just fifty years of age: a tall man of muscle and bone and no unnecessary flesh about him. He had all the best instincts of a soldier, and was a brave daring man that no amount of work could tire. He was a perfect horseman, who thoroughly understood the animal he rode, and was understood by it. No heat seemed to affect him, and long service in India had taught him the character, ways and mode of thought common to the Indian people. He was liked by every good man who knew him, and all those with whom he was intimate loved him. I never met a man with a higher sense of duty. His manner was against him. He was often confused in



## SIR HOPE GRANT

his conversation, and always experienced some difficulty in putting his thoughts into words, or in describing clearly what he wished you to do. He knew exactly himself what it was he wanted done, but had not the knack of imparting it clearly to others.

He very seldom used a field glass of any sort in action, for his sight was very good, and he quickly and accurately took in the enemy's position before the fight began. I often heard him maintain that after troops had been deployed for action the general in command could exercise little or no further influence over the fortune of the day. Once fully engaged himself in any battle, he interfered little in its further progress until the pursuit began. Being in early life a first rate man with hounds, it was often a puzzle to me that he should have so much difficulty in taking in, either from a map or from personal inspection, the general features of a country, the direction of its rivers, the lie of its hills, etc. Like the great majority of those who were his contemporaries in early life, he was imperfectly educated upon all subjects except that of music. That he thoroughly understood, scientifically as well as practically. He played delightfully upon the violoncello, and always told us laughingly that he owed to it his first chance in the Army. It was thus: General Lord Saltoun, who had been appointed to command a Brigade in our China war, of 1839-40, was a good musician and played the fiddle well. Anxious, if possible, to obtain the services of a Brigade Major who could accompany him on the violoncello, he went to the Horse Guards to ask if the authorities knew of any one who could do so. He was at once told of Captain Hope Grant, of the 9th Lancers, who had recently published some of his own compositions for that instrument. The Brigadier and his

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Brigade Major fiddled together for months in the old sailing frigate *Belle Isle* that took them to Chusan.

Except the Bible, which he knew thoroughly, he read few books. He was one of the very best and most religious men I ever knew. His religion was of the simplest kind, an implicit trust in God, whom he knew to be his helper in all he did. Honest, upright, truthful, fearless and good, he was simple minded and absolutely chivalrous in all his thoughts and deeds. Daring to a fault in all his military plans and actions, he endeared himself to every one who knew him well. To be intimate with him was to love him, and to his staff he was the most hospitable of generals, the best and the kindest of friends. He possessed the military intuition that made him a perfect commander of outposts, and he handled cavalry with great quickness and judgment. It was his own arm, and he never thoroughly understood the handling of infantry in action. Good fortune followed his footsteps, and the affair of Simree, which I describe further on, was the only occasion I knew of where that fickle wench played him false.

In all the military history of our country I do not know of a campaign that was better planned or more successfully brought to a conclusion than that which he conducted in China in 1860. Coming after the great naval disaster at the Pei-Ho Forts, and ending with the capture of Peking, it marked a great epoch in the history of our relations with the East. It certainly did him great credit as a general.

Sir Hope's A.D.C., the Hon. Augustus Anson, was a soldier after my own heart. A man of much ability and of great common sense, but badly educated. A daring though an indifferent rider, he might have been a first class general had he stuck to the Army and not taken to politics and

## AUGUSTUS ANSON

Parliament instead. No better, no braver gentleman ever wore a red coat. He was a keen sportsman, and his energy and determination were boundless. He possessed the great, the rare gift of a natural aptitude for war. A general favourite, Sir Hope Grant was sincerely attached to him, and that feeling was fully returned by the A.D.C. for his general. He had much influence with Sir Hope, and more than once when he and I, putting our young heads together, thought that some particular plan should be adopted, or certain movements made, he was able to induce Sir Hope to see matters as we did. But Sir Hope was very difficult to persuade, and without Augustus Anson's backing up I should have failed entirely. It was long before I obtained any influence with him, for he seemed to regard me as too young to be wise, and most probably also thought me bumptious and self-opiniated. What struck me as very odd was, that although Sir Hope and his adjutant-general had been for very many years in India, neither of them could speak Hindostanee. Indeed, neither could say more than a few words in it. But in those days the officers in the Queen's Army had practically no inducement to study the native languages. The Indian Staff at that time was by no means what it should have been. It had in it some extremely able soldiers, men like Sir Henry Norman, Sir Peter Lumsden and others who would have risen to eminence in any army. But as a rule, the staff I came to know in the Bengal Presidency at the period I am writing about, were too old and too old-fashioned in their ideas. They were over-weighted with out-of-date regulations which smacked more of the counting-house than of camps and garrisons, and which tended to dwarf the initiative and smother the natural intelligence of the officers for whose

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

guidance they were intended. Many of these regulations were positively silly, and all seemed framed to control theft in high places, which was apparently assumed by those who framed them to be the instinct natural to all military officers. To administer a British Army on those lines might be possible in time of peace, but the attempt to do so when the whole native army of Bengal were in arms against us was supremely silly.

Sir Colin Campbell should have had those military regulations publicly burnt by the Provost-Marshal. As an example I may explain to my readers that to draw my monthly pay, the application had to be in triplicate, accompanied by a certificate from certain named authorities that I was alive upon the dates I claimed it for. The fact that I was certified, say by a bishop, to be alive in June, was not held to be sufficient evidence that I had been so also in the previous month of May : a separate certificate was required for that fact as well. What an amusing article might be written upon those military regulations and upon those who framed them !

I was still only a captain, but had been promised as a reward for my Crimean services that I should be promoted to the rank of major as soon as I had been six years in the army. That was, and still is, the minimum length of service required before any captain can obtain a majority. I had completed that period of service the previous month, and expected to see my name in the next *Gazette* we received from home. My great drawback at the moment was a want of Indian experience and my ignorance of the Hindostanee language. However, I knew that time and earnest work would soon correct both those shortcomings. When I reported myself to Sir Hope Grant, I could see that

## MY YOUTH WAS AGAINST ME

he looked upon me as a mere boy, accustomed as he was from long residence in India to old lieutenants, ancient captains and fossilized staff officers. His adjutant-general was an old gentleman from the ranks who had been his adjutant for several years. Sir Hope believed him to be a first rate man ; I did not. He had many good qualities, but of staff work in the field he did not know the first principles.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### The Re-Conquest of Oudh, 1858-9

THE conquest of Oudh, after the final capture of Lucknow, entailed a vast amount of marching, fighting and skirmishing through its plains, and the crossing of many rivers, of which the Gogra at Fyzabad was over 1,000 yards in width. We had at times several small columns operating in different parts of the kingdom, but except during the time that Lord Clyde took part in its subjugation, the largest and in every way the most important column was that under the immediate command of Sir Hope Grant. During these marches, which extended over a period of many months, the usual routine was as follows. The first bugle went at 2 a.m. : I dressed and had a cup of tea and ate a biscuit, and was in the saddle at 2.30 a.m. I then rode slowly—with a native guide by my side—to the point I had selected the previous evening for the advanced guard to form upon. The several battalions of foot, batteries of artillery and regiments of cavalry then fell into their allotted positions in the main column along the road or track I had reconnoitred for a short distance the day before. All was usually ready for the march by 3 a.m., when we started. If not near an enemy, the bands struck up, and for the first two hours we made good play in the required direction. The sun rose in the months of March and April

## ON THE MARCH IN OUDH

about 4.30, and when the moon was at all big it gave us that clear, bright light which she only condescends to afford man in the tropics. In looking over some old home letters I find that when marching beyond the river Gogra in April, 1859, I mention that when the sun had risen above the horizon, upon more than one occasion the moon, a planet, and some great stars combined with it to brighten all objects in the surrounding landscape. My old Irish nurse, the best and most genial of very good women, who died when over eighty in my mother's house, used to tell me when a boy that I had only to "wish" for anything I desired upon seeing such an auspicious conjunction of luminaries, to be assured of having it accomplished. I always did so wish upon those rare occasions, but I cannot in any instance record the fulfilment of the wish I thought of.

Our ordinary marches were generally of ten miles only, as the sun became extremely unpleasant by 8 a.m.

The length of our daily column of march extended over several miles. Crowds of doolies for the sick and wounded, some thousands of camels carrying tents, the men's packs, their bedding, ammunition, spare horses, crowds of syces, many of them on ponies, a large hospital establishment of doctors, apothecaries and servants to look after the sick. I forget what camels the regimental officers had, but I know that I usually had five or six. The officers paid for their own camels. Then the Commissariat required a vast amount of hackeries—native carts—each drawn by two bullocks to carry provisions, and a baker's establishment, for we had fresh bread every day. In any other country where I have campaigned any such amount of impedimenta would have rendered all movements impossible. The number of our servants were preposterous; for each of my horses I had

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

two men, one a groom the other a grass cutter. What a chance for an enemy like that opposed to us, who lived upon the country and required no transport! If there had been a thousand of good mounted infantry under a real good leader opposed to us in Oudh at this time it would have altered the whole character of the war. We could not possibly have marched in the formation we did. We should have had to march the cavalry and artillery across country, leaving what we called the road for the native hackeries. Never did any regular army have to contend with a more unenterprising enemy than we had then. It was a bad school in that respect for young officers anxious to learn their work. The feeling that we could thus march about with impunity wherever we wished tended to make us careless in scouting and in all the precautionary measures usually taken to protect an army against surprise when on the march.

Our campaign in the Baiswarra district began in the hottest part of the hot season, when the sun's angry and aggressive heat seems not only to scorch the head, but to muddle and make chaos of the brain within it. It was very trying to every one who took part in it, but to the British Foot Soldier it was an awful experience. How my heart bled for him as I saw him trudge along, mile after mile, through dense clouds of dust over a parched and burnt-up country. What an uncomplaining fellow he is! In all my campaigning recollections he stands out as that which I am proudest of, and as the character in the great play of my soldier-career that I admire most. Those allotted more prominent parts in the drama of military life are better known to the outside world, and are consequently more talked of. But in my heart I feel that all the King's



## THE PROVINCE OF OUDH

subjects owe most to our Infantry Rank and File who for the last two centuries have marched through the Low Countries, France, Spain, and Portugal, or who shared in the trench work before Sebastopol and in the privations to which the winter of 1854-5 exposed them, or who have marched from the north to the south of India to fight our battles for us. If ever I became rich, I would erect a splendid monument to the memory of the private soldiers who in their thousands have fought round the world to make England the great Empire she is now.

Oudh is a level rich and well cultivated province. Its villages are all built of sun-burnt brick, and are consequently of an ugly khaki colour, their walls being well scored by the heavy rains they are exposed to every wet season. Their doors, and the shutters which close the openings where we should have windows, are of the roughest carpentry. But in all the native houses of these upper provinces, the royal palaces excepted, the woodwork is as if hewn with an adze rather than as if cut with a saw or smoothed by a plane. Their roofs are invariably flat, upon which, at sunset every evening, the women and children assemble in order, as their native idiom describes it, "to drink the air." There are a few tamarind and mango trees usually about these villages and detached houses, many of the latter being enclosed by high kutcha-built walls. In the mango groves—topes, as they are called in the vernacular—there is usually a good well, constructed of burnt brick, whose water is reserved for drinking purposes, whilst from others of larger size water is drawn by bullocks to irrigate the neighbouring gardens and surrounding fields. In some parts of Oudh there are cocoa-nut trees, but they are not numerous. The villages remind one much of those

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to be seen all over Egypt. I was daily brought in contact with their well-to-do, as also with their poorest, inhabitants in my inquiries about roads, the depth of rivers and streams to be crossed, the whereabouts of the enemy, and the common news of the locality, etc. In dealing with every class one had never to forget that all are liars by nature and habit, and, from suspicion as to the object of your questions, they endeavour to mislead, and show much ingenuity in the construction of their untruthful answers. Some villages were loop-holed, and the large proprietors usually lived in forts with deep ditches and hidden all round by some hundred yards of close jungle.

The mass of the people are Hindoos, including the great landlords, or zamẽendars and talookdars, as they are locally called. The traveller in Oudh sees here and there a mosque, but the gracefully shaped Hindoo temple is ten times more numerous. Scattered throughout the province there are many very fine tanks. Most are surrounded with tall handsome trees, and at each there is usually either a Hindoo temple or a Mohammedan shrine, according to the religion of the charitable person at whose cost the tank was made. In many instances the surrounding groves are enlivened by numbers of monkeys or baboons. They chatter without ceasing as long as it is daylight, and are interesting creatures to study. Upon many occasions I have camped or bivouacked in the shelter of these groves, and have at times been highly amused and almost fascinated by their cunning but solemnly performed antics. They are so very human in many of their ways. They even steal from one another, and their females, who quarrel and jabber incessantly, seem full of feminine jealousy. Yet these monkeys never express by laughter the fun they are evi-

## THE LUCKNOW MOULVEE

dently full of. It would seem to be the one characteristic that distinguishes man from all the beasts that perish.

After many a long dusty march, when camped near such a tank, I have thrown my hot, weary body into its cool water. I remember one evening, in the very hot season, Augustus Anson and I rode to one of these tanks that was near where the army had encamped. Whilst rolling about in its refreshing waters, a yellow snake put his head up over the surface close to my face and shook his tongue at me as he did so. Having, more than most men, a loathing horror and indescribable repugnance to all sorts of reptiles, and to snakes in particular, I felt almost paralyzed with a sort of terror, and struck out for the stepped side of the tank as fast as if I were pursued by a whole zoological garden full of hostile and man-devouring beasts and reptiles. My sense told me, from the shape of the snake's head, that it was harmless, as most water-snakes are, but this knowledge brought me no immediate satisfaction ; it was, I think, the dread lest my body should come in contact with it that terrified me. I have never been able to get over this horror of reptiles, and still fly even from the harmless toad.

At the beginning of April, 1858, the celebrated Moulvee had collected a force of about 6,000 foot and 1,000 horse—all fanatical Mohammedans—at Baree, a village on the Seetapore road, some twenty-nine miles NNW. of Lucknow. He was an active, clever fellow, with a great reputation for sanctity, and bore us an old grudge for having placed him in irons previous to the Mutiny. This we had done because he openly preached resistance to our rule. Every day that his holiness was left unmolested he grew more important in native estimation.

Until Sir Hope could make the Oudh people realize that

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

he meant to take the field whenever it was thought necessary to do so, no matter how hot the weather might be, the idea would prevail amongst them that European soldiers could not march during the summer season. What hundreds of lives would have been saved could we have mounted our men on camels, donkeys, or ponies ! This supposed immunity from attack brought daily reinforcements to the Moulvee's camp, until at last it was deemed necessary to teach him a lesson. With that object in view, Sir Hope Grant started from the Lucknow Cantonments on April 11, 1858. We all felt that the heat was the worst enemy we should have to encounter. It made my heart sick to see our soldiers tumble about on the march from heat apoplexy. In all those hot weather marches, and we had many of them then, our British infantry had to tramp along rough country cart-tracks from which rose dense clouds of dust that hung about and enveloped us. No breath of wind came, either to drive the dust away or to afford the soldiers any relief.

The column employed on this occasion consisted of a brigade of British foot, a battalion of Sikhs, a brigade of cavalry composed of the 7th Hussars, a squadron of the Queen's Bays, some troops of Wales' Horse, of Hodson's Horse, and a battery of horse artillery ; there were also two field batteries and some heavy guns with the column. In the fight with this Moulvee, which came off during the third day's march, our loss from sword and bullet was insignificant, but the sun killed many and incapacitated a still larger number. The enemy fought with much pluck under their holy leader, but our attack, well planned and admirably carried out, was too much for them. Indeed, the whole affair in many respects resembled a successful field day.

## CHARGED BY ENEMY'S CAVALRY

We had started an hour before daybreak, and, as usual, I had marched with the advanced party of the advanced guard, having some guides to show the way alongside my horse.

Just as the first gleam of day showed itself on our eastern horizon, and whilst it was still dark, I saw to my surprise, about 400 yards in front, a body of horsemen drawn up across the path we were advancing by. I galloped back to bring up the cavalry of the advanced guard, thinking the enemy would bolt, as they usually did upon the approach of the British dragoon. I was jogging forward at a trot with this cavalry detachment when, to my intense astonishment, the enemy came on at a good pace and charged us. Our two horse artillery guns with the advanced guard had just time to unlimber, load, and meet them with a round of canister. The enemy came upon us so quickly and so pluckily that I was obliged to draw my sword, an unusual necessity with a staff officer. When they had come near enough to take in the position, they swerved from our front, and went helter skelter into a squadron of Wales' Horse that had formed up on the other side of the guns. I did my best to persuade the officer commanding the squadron of the 7th to charge, but he did not think it advisable to leave the guns unprotected. I thought he was wrong, as the opportunity was good, and the moment seemed ticklish. Wales' Horse, by no means a brilliant lot in any way upon any occasion, were now in confusion, although they stood the charge and met the enemy hand to hand. I did not, however, relish standing by doing nothing when separated only by the two horse artillery guns from the *mêlée* going on within a few yards of us. The enemy, thinking it was time to be off, made

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

for our dhoolies, already tolerably full of sun-stricken men. As soon as we had deployed, an advance was made upon the position taken up by the enemy's infantry and guns. Their horse made several charges upon the flanks of our infantry. A squadron of the 7th Hussars charged them, both sides met at full tilt, and we lost several men. At the moment I was engaged in posting two companies of the Bengal Fusiliers to protect the flank where our baggage was being collected. The fusiliers stood well, and received them with a well delivered volley that emptied many saddles. The enemy had charged well home; indeed, one of their sowars was killed amongst our dhoolies. The whole affair was creditable to Sir Hope Grant and to his commanding officers, and I find it noted in a letter I wrote home that same day that it was the first occasion upon which I had seen the enemy face us bravely in the open. I believe it was because of the Moulvee's presence, as his followers had absolute faith in that holy man's invincibility.

Having broken up the Moulvee's force and so destroyed his claim to invincibility, Sir Hope Grant was ordered to Poorwa, a village of some importance about thirty miles south of Lucknow, to protect the Cawnpore road, then threatened by Beni Madhoo. There we were joined by the Sikh Rajah of Kuppertola in the Punjaub, and it was determined to transfer this duty to him. When he paid Sir Hope his formal visit of ceremony, a salute was fired in his honour. He was not prepared for this compliment, and his fat figure bounded off his chair when the first gun was fired, for he thought we were attacked. When the matter was explained, he was much gratified, for all native princes attach much importance to such honours.

## THIEF CATCHING IN INDIA

This rajah was a nice young fellow and sincerely anxious to serve the State. He spoke and wrote English well, was very rich and much bejewelled when he paid his visit. Some months afterwards, when we were suffering much in camp from professional thieves, he quite calmly and seriously advised Sir Hope, the most humane of men, to adopt the method by which he said his father had rid his camp of these pests many years before. The father succeeded, he said, after much difficulty in catching in a trap set for the purpose one of these thieves who had followed his camp for weeks and had stolen heavily from it. He had him profusely anointed with sulphur and brimstone, and then set fire to him, every one in camp being obliged to watch the burning operation. He said, with a curious grunt of satisfaction, that they were never annoyed by thieves after that.

When the hot weather with its burning winds had set in, Sir Hope Grant found it necessary to restrict his military expeditions from Lucknow. No British infantry could march through Oudh in such heat without great loss from sunstroke and heat apoplexy. But we had a Chief Commissioner living in a very comfortable house, whose head was never exposed to the piercing sun, whilst every luxury that a great salary could provide helped to keep his quarters cool and his body in good health. But not so the British foot soldier. His life was a very hard one at this time, and this Chief Commissioner would have had Sir Hope Grant make it harder. Long service in India had taught Sir Hope to dread the power of the highly placed civilian administrator to ruin any general's reputation. But he was not a man to be induced by any such personal consideration to unduly expose his soldiers during the hot months.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

The result was, frequent complaints were made to Government that Sir Hope would not undertake military expeditions which the Chief Commissioner deemed necessary. What did it matter to him if soldiers died of heat apoplexy during these marches! Somewhat sore because he had not been able to quickly restore peace in Oudh, he now strove, with unmanly ingratitude for all the general had already done for him, to throw the blame of that failure upon Sir Hope. He accused of want of energy, and even of daring, one who was the most ceaselessly energetic and enterprising man I ever served with! It was an abuse of the position he occupied. But Lord Clyde, who knew Sir Hope Grant of old, was not to be misled by this Commissioner's self-interested complaints. Staunch to his convictions regarding a well known comrade, he defended Sir Hope against the fault-finding aspersions of the civilian clique in Lucknow, who then had Lord Canning's ear. But how different it might have been had the Commander-in-Chief known little of Sir Hope Grant's character, and of his absolute indifference to all personal comfort in the performance of his military duties.

I was at this time busy in trying to provide better accommodation for our soldiers at the several military stations we had established in Oudh. The horrors of a hot season under canvas on the baked fields of that province are terrible to the soldier in a crowded tent. Nothing to do all day but fan the flies from his face, as he lies on his rough native charpoy, means a weary existence indeed. We had no books for our men, and very few newspapers came their way. Their life was horrible, and well might any man amongst them wish he were within the cool clean precincts of a home prison instead. If, my civilian friends, you knew the



## EFFECT OF HOT WEATHER UPON US

miseries our men endured uncomplainingly in the hot weather of 1858 in Oudh, you would feel how much you owe and how much you ought to esteem every old soldier you meet who wears a Mutiny medal with a Lucknow clasp to it.

We young soldiers, though new to India, were fully aware of how completely the old order of things under the Indian system of government, civil and military, had broken down, and were consequently astonished to find the old civilian servants of the Company anxious to re-establish everywhere the pre-Mutiny system.

For the benefit of any military officers who may ever find themselves in the position of Lord Clyde or of Sir Hope Grant, at this juncture I would warn them against exposing British soldiers to fatiguing and protracted military operations during the hot weather in a country like Oudh. When that kingdom was won back by our soldiers in 1858, and civil authority was once more fairly re-established under the protection of their bayonets, commanding officers of British troops were often called upon by inconsiderate civilians to march their men in the hottest season of the year for the purpose of punishing some Rajah or Nawab, who would neither pay his taxes nor obey Government orders. In such cases many will always be the reasons urged for immediate compliance with such demands. Because our commanders never spared themselves nor their men during the great crisis we had recently passed through, the unthoughtful commissioner of a district was too prone to conclude that he ought never be refused the help of British troops to enforce his decrees. No dread of how fatal the sun might prove to our soldiers when employed upon this police work ever seemed to give the commissioner pause.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

It is not easy for those who are unacquainted with the East to fully appreciate what the march of an Indian army, with its thousands of camp-followers, means to the inhabitants of the country traversed. Follow in the wake of such an invasion, and you will find the effect upon the districts passed through to be usually very like that caused by the march of a huge column of locusts before they can fly, as I have seen it in Cyprus. The walking locusts go forward in the direction they have fixed upon, and turning neither to the right nor to the left, eat up as they advance every green leaf in their path, and leave an absolute desert behind them. In many instances, such was very much the result of our marches through the still unsettled districts of Oudh at this period.

In some instances the friendly zameendar who had sought our help must have repented him of the evil he had thereby inflicted upon his country and its inhabitants. In many of our tramps over the plains of Oudh, I thought of the marches made further north by the armies of Alexander and of Porus, and felt how much there must still be in common between the scene before me and that looked upon by every Greek soldier who followed the Macedonian madman as he pressed forward towards the Jelum. The same glitter from bright weapons, the same tramp of men, neighing of horses, beating of drums and braying of trumpets; the similarly caparisoned elephants, the same grunting, overladen camels. In Hindostan, where native habits and customs change little with time, we are justified in assuming that twenty-one centuries earlier the men whom the Greeks met in the country of "The Five Rivers," were clothed in garments very similar to those worn by our splendid Sikh soldiers in 1858.

## MOUNTED INFANTRY

Alexander, however, most probably marched on a much wider front than we did, in order to embrace a larger extent of country from which, in passing, to draw supplies. His army lived entirely upon the inhabitants; ours did so only partially.

Whilst encamped at Newabgunj Bara Bunkee, at the end of May, 1858, Sir Hope continued to receive letters from the Chief Commissioner in Lucknow that would have alarmed most men. But my general had become accustomed to this cry of "wolf" from that quarter, and although they were usually marked "Immediate" and filled with stories that warned us of great rebel armies on the march to destroy us, they were for the most part merely docketed and "put away." If we had had a Commander of weak nerve and who was gullible by nature, our troops would have been harassed by frequent marches in the hottest season of the year, and our loss from the sun would certainly have been enormous. Indeed, there would have been but little left of our British infantry by the end of 1859.

Here I must once more record my regret that it never occurred to anyone at the time I now write about to make use of mounted infantry. That lesson we were to learn four years later from the War of Secession in the United States. Armies are slow to adopt new ideas, for even as late as 1870 no use whatever was made of mounted infantry by either France or Germany.

## CHAPTER XXV

### The Baiswarra Campaign, 1858

**F**ROM the date of our fight at Baree until the end of the month—April, 1858—Sir Hope Grant was constantly on the march. He destroyed many strong native forts, and by starting very early each morning was enabled to finish his ten miles before the sun had become dangerously hot. But notwithstanding every precaution, we lost men daily from heat apoplexy.

We found Jung Bahadoor's troops halted on the road to Newabgunj, where it was intended we should remain for the present. This Ghoorka force numbered about 8,000 fighting men with twenty guns. But 2,000 were sick, and as he had 4,000 carts carrying supplies, and as each cart required a man to guard it, only 2,000 men were left available for the day of battle.

After some fatiguing marches we were ordered back to Lucknow, and thence to Poorwa. My own battalion now joined our column, which I was very glad of, for I knew it could always be depended upon to do whatever was required of it. The total strength of our column was 4,500 fighting men.

It was with great satisfaction that we shortly afterwards marched to Doundea-Kera, a very strong native fort on the Oudh side of the Ganges, and about thirty

## WE FIGHT AT SIMREE

miles below Cawnpore. There several of the poor fugitives, men and women, who had escaped from that city of slaughter, had been caught and murdered by the monster who owned the place. Finding it deserted, we took possession on May 10, 1858, exactly a year from the day the Mutiny began. We destroyed it, but regretted much we had not caught the miscreant Hindoo owner, to have hung him on the spot where he had murdered our countrypeople.

On May 12 we marched ten miles in a north-easterly direction to Nuggur, where I had hoped the general would halt, as the dreadfully hot weather had already begun to tell seriously upon our men. But shortly after we had pitched camp, news came that the enemy had taken up a position about six miles to the eastward of us, at a place called Simree, and the general decided he would march upon them at five o'clock that same afternoon. It was an unwise decision, for no European infantry could march in such heat, especially as the hot wind was then blowing hard, striking the face as does the blast from a furnace which is suddenly opened upon you. Sir Hope would listen to no remonstrance, so the march was ordered. A guard of 200 men with two guns and a squadron of cavalry were left with the baggage, stores, etc., etc., and it was intended we should bivouac for the night wherever we should be after we had disposed of the enemy.

Upon this occasion the infantry private was tried more than I have ever seen him tried, and our losses from heat apoplexy alone were accordingly very heavy. Our fight that followed this awful march and its events are indelibly burned into my memory.

This is the only operation Sir Hope Grant ever made

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

to my knowledge that I feel justified in finding fault with. It was a terrible lesson to all of us. I know that he was most anxious at the time in question to clear the district of the rebels and to make them realize that not even the hottest of hot weather could protect them from the bayonet of the British soldier. But in war you may purchase even the most desirable objects at too great a cost. In this instance he and his troops had to pay dearly in order to bring this fact home to the native mind.

Upon this occasion, May 12, 1858, tents were struck and the column of route formed about 3 p.m. A fiercely hot wind blew upon me clouds of burning dust as I turned in the required direction. I felt it burn my skin; and I had some trouble with heel and spur to make my Arab charger face it. About a mile or two from camp, I came upon a squadron of the 7th Hussars on outlying picket. Its general appearance was appalling. Two of its three officers lay helpless under trees with wet towels round their heads, and the men in an exhausted condition lay about in twos and threes under whatever shelter they could find. I had a good helmet with an unusually long turban wound round it, yet the sun seemed to gimlet a hole through it into my brain. My very hair seemed to crackle from the burning heat, and the nails of one's fingers became as if made of some brittle material that must soon break.

I formed the column along the dust-laden cart track that by courtesy and custom I styled a road when I spoke of it in Hindostanee to the guide who accompanied me. I wonder what he must have thought of it all! In what words did he describe to his friends afterwards the general

## HEAVY LOSSES FROM THE SUN

condition of the "Ghora Log" whom he saw with that outlying picquet upon the road?

Before we were fairly formed up and had started, the division had already suffered heavily in men disabled by heat apoplexy, of which many subsequently died.

Sir Hope Grant had passed all his life in the cavalry, and did not realize how much the foot soldier, laden with rifle, bayonet, accoutrements and sixty rounds of ball ammunition, suffers when marched in extreme heat. He consequently adopted a formation to advance in which in temperate zones, and when not exposed to any serious artillery fire, is a very convenient one to deploy from into line of battle. I mean a line of quarter columns at deploying intervals. But in the great heat and dust of that season of the year it was an extremely unwise formation. His mind was apparently so full of the question from a tactical point of view that having had little experience with infantry, he overlooked all other considerations. The result was a most disastrous march, during which the men in the centres of these quarter columns absolutely stifled from want of air and the dense dust they inhaled, fell out by dozens, whilst the enemy's cavalry, sweeping round our flanks, fell upon our dhoolies, already filled with soldiers in every phase of sunstroke. I regret to say the enemy's sowars killed many of them, decapitating several as they lay in an unconscious state. When at last we got at the enemy the usual process took place; we charged and took about a dozen of their guns. They seemed to know that they could no more stand against our men, than our men could stand the heat. We kept driving them before us, not calculating that the sun was already near the horizon. The cooler the day became the more we revived to our work,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

and so went blundering forward, killing numbers, but forgetting that darkness was at hand. The sun went down, and the general still pressed on until want of light stopped all further advance. In that part of India it gets more or less suddenly dark without any special warning. But the usual indications of approaching night were there, though we were too busy, our minds too preoccupied, to notice them. There was no moon to be seen, and consequently we soon found ourselves in the unfortunate position of not knowing exactly where we were, and of having but a vague notion of where the several component parts of our division were to be found. No one knew who was on his right or left. To halt for the night when darkness thus suddenly overtook us was consequently our sole resource. Of food we officers had little, but the men had biscuit in their haversacks. Happy the mounted officer who had a syce to hold his horse whilst he lay down. I cannot say that the staff had much sleep, but all were worn out, and on all sides the snoring of exhausted men was to be heard. During the night the enemy managed to carry off the guns we had taken from him, so we thus lost the only trophies of the success we had achieved under the greatest difficulties that an Indian hot weather can oppose to military operations. I must confess that every one had a really bad night of it, but I feel convinced that our leader, Sir Hope, must have felt it the most from having realized that he had made a mistake, and his staff, who were sincerely attached to him, loyally felt for him accordingly.

In the course of my campaigning I have experienced some trying false alarms by night. Under all circumstances they are usually terrible affairs, never to be forgotten. For a moment they appear to rob of their senses



## A NIGHT ALARM

even men of the stoutest heart and of the calmest intellect. Yet, even then, the steadying voice of one cool man will often restore reason to those about him. But that "cool man" is not always at hand when most required. Darkness magnifies the supposed dangers which a heated brain is apt to conjure up upon any sudden "alarm" at night, and it often paralyses the reasoning power during the noise and fury which follow. For the instant, many are absolute lunatics and wholly irresponsible for what they do or say. To me it has always been literally terrifying to see brave soldiers not only thus bereft of reason, but often for the moment of all courage also. We are prone to pooh-pooh the phlegmatic man as slow and dull, but at such moments of terror we feel that God has not made him in vain.

Having a great horror of night alarms, of which I had had some previous experience, I induced Sir Hope to take up a position for himself and staff to await daybreak between the guns of a field battery that was near us when darkness set in. It is a secure place in the event of any untoward affair at night, for no one can run or ride over you. The gun-teams remained hooked to all night, so the tired drivers had a bad time until day broke the following morning.

I lay beside my chief, and was soon in the land of forgetfulness. I cannot remember at what hour it was that I was roused by a fiendish uproar as if all the devils in hell had been let loose. Every one seemed to be engaged in shouting on his own account as I awoke; the tramp of riderless horses galloping to and fro added much to the confusion; some shots were fired, and several comrades fought in deadly strife one with another, each under the belief that he was attacked by a mutineer. The officer commanding the battery between whose guns we had been

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

sleeping, a fat, prosy, stupid little man, was, according to the account he subsequently gave of the affair, attacked and knocked down. As he fell, it was said that seeing something suddenly rise between himself and the sky which he took for his enemy, he fired his revolver and put a bullet through the supposed mutineer. But unfortunately, it was not an enemy, but his own foot he had fired at, and it was through it the bullet went. For many years afterwards no one dared to talk in his presence of this unfortunate battle, and it was too serious a subject ever to allude to his wounded foot.

In a battalion close to us, the officer commanding cut down one of his own officers thinking he was a sepoy making for him. I do not remember what our loss in the action had been, nor how many were killed or injured in this appalling false alarm: but taking it all in all, the whole business was the most unfortunate affair I was ever engaged in. Although he never talked of it to me, I am convinced that Sir Hope felt it deeply, and was fully aware of how great, how fatal was his error in undertaking such a march in the hottest time of the day at that very dangerous period of the summer.

A senseless panic at times seizes upon even the bravest soldiers; I know not why, but it rarely spreads to the commissioned officer. He is better bred and better educated, and, accustomed to think for others, he acts less upon impulse and more upon reason than the private. Taught the habit of command and trained to lead others, he is far less liable to this sudden heart-sinking than the brave fellows who follow him.

When under the influence of panic, men for the moment are mad, and act without reason. Whilst the fit lasts,

## SENSELESS PANIC

they are capable of the most idiotic actions, and often become dead to all sense of self-respect and of discipline ; in fact, they cease to behave like responsible beings. Nothing but some violent shock, as with the somnambulist, or some chance and often trifling occurrence brings them back to the grave realities of their position. This can only be fully realized by those who have witnessed a false alarm on a dark night with an army in the field, and who have felt the shock of panic which it sometimes occasions in a mass of even the bravest men suddenly roused from sleep by some untoward accident, some unusual event. The extent to which stalwart soldiers may become a terrified mob in the twinkling of an eye is amazing. The surrounding darkness, and the suddenness with which they are awakened, the shouts and still worse, the clang of arms, all add to their causeless fright. Men so bewildered often bayonet one another ; I have known even officers to cut down their comrades in the first burst of wild alarm, and when once any such sort of surprise degenerates into fighting, a regular stampede often follows.

The man of any rank who on such an occasion keeps his head and at once takes in the position is for the moment invaluable : he is a true king of men. In the midst of deafening noise and turmoil, if he be cool, his coolness soon reduces the high temperature of those around him, for as panic is infectious, so is stolid, angered coolness also. See such a man spring nobly to the front. Although perhaps not the senior officer on the spot, all instinctively recognize and obey him as their leader when in tones of angry authority he shouts his orders in a way that commands instant obedience. He soon brings all those near him to their rational senses ; and as widening circles extend

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

round the spot where a stone falls into the pool, so reason, with collected courage spreads round him in a rapidly widening circumference. Personal danger, great though it may be, is at once forgotten by all near him, for his overpowering individuality is soon felt and quickly leavens the perturbed mass, until reasoned quiet reigns supreme once more. The men who had been dazed with, they knew not what, are forthwith sobered into normal sanity: their frenzied fear vanishes, and under the steadying influence of this one officer's example they are once more a daring, defiant Rank and File, as with fierce demonlike recklessness they turn upon their enemy, heedless alike of danger and of all consequences. The first act in such a drama comes back in after years as a nightmare to be remembered with horror. But with the remembrance of its second phase comes the redeeming recollection of noble deeds, and of heroes to whom danger with all its usually terrible accompaniments seemed to have been an ordinary occurrence, a positive enjoyment. It is the indescribable influence of a born leader maddened for the moment with the exultation that some feel during the presence of extreme danger, which converts dismayed confusion into order, and begets triumph. When such a man appears amidst a panic-stricken crowd, even the faint in spirit take new strength. Their brief, though appalling heart-sinking vanishes as with the stroke of a wizard's wand, and they press forward with that shout which with friend and foe is known to mean victory. Men who thus rapidly experience such opposite sensations live for the moment as it were in another world. The dazed skulker is often converted in an instant into the hero so recklessly brave that it is impossible to pronounce whether he be human or divine, mere soldier or inspired devil. Those

## THE EXCITEMENT OF BATTLE

who have had to fight for their lives in the confusion of a storming party or in the noise and din of a cavalry *mêlée*, know what all this means. They understand its delights and exultation, and remember its disappointments and the crushing reaction which often follows. Until men have had such experience they cannot know how often glory is closely allied to shame, and how nearly related the noble feeling of self-sacrifice may be to the frenzied brutality of the savage.

Most surely it is only the man that has often fought side by side with the British soldier who knows what a daring and self-sacrificing fellow, and what a magnificent fighter he is when well led. But he must be well led, and as a general rule I believe that leader must be a British gentleman.

At daybreak next morning all the staff were busy collecting our scattered Division, the enemy having entirely disappeared. During the confusion of the night, however, they had repossessed themselves of all the guns they had lost during the action! From Simree we carried away no trophy, but it taught us a lesson which none ever forgot.

Soon afterwards, on June 13, 1858, Sir Hope Grant had a most successful engagement at a place north of the Goomtee named Newabgunj Bara Bunkee, and nearly eighteen miles due east from Lucknow. There we inflicted heavy loss, both in guns and in men, upon the enemy. Upon that occasion we struck camp at Chinut in the evening before it was dark, and left our tents and all baggage under the protection of a guard 1,200 strong. The men slept until about 10 p.m., and fell in at 11 p.m. to begin their march of twelve miles. Newabgunj Bara Bunkee had lately been

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the rallying point for all the Oudh rebels, and our latest information led us to believe that their fighting force collected there numbered about 15,000, most of whom were plucky zameendary men, who had with them a large number of guns. All told, our column only numbered 3,500 fighting men, but we always went into action quite certain we should win, and I presume that one of the reasons we did so was that the intelligent men amongst the enemy also felt we should. They were consequently half beaten by the time we had opened fire upon them. It was a very dark night, and the last six miles were across the open, as we had quitted the usual road.

We had a small cavalry charge during the day, when Captain Charles Frazer, in command of his squadron of the 7th Hussars, got right in amongst some of the enemy's horse and foot. I had charged with it to see what the thing was like. But the dust raised was so great that all I really saw when in the thick of the *mêlée* was the flashing of tulwars and of sabres. Frazer was given the Victoria Cross for this charge, and deserved it, for he was a daring and brilliant cavalry leader.

Augustus Anson, V.C., was riding a big flea-bitten greyish Gulf Arab that had belonged to his uncle General Anson, who died when Commander-in-Chief at the beginning of the Mutiny. Augustus, an indifferent horseman and a bad swordsman, never lost a chance of taking part in any cavalry charge that "was going" in his neighbourhood. So of course he also charged with Frazer, and joined in this *mêlée* to his heart's content. When I saw him after the charge, his flea-bitten grey was bleeding from many a sabre cut. During the course of the Mutiny he had had a large number of hand-to-hand encounters with individual Sowars, in which he had generally killed his man. I can

## A CAVALRY CHARGE

see him in action in my mind's eye now, with his mouth firmly closed and determination marked on every feature of his face. He was in every sense a soldier, absolutely indifferent to danger; he revelled in those hand-to-hand encounters. His family should revere his memory, for he was a relative to be remembered: I know that I am proud to have been his friend.

During this action I had a great deal of galloping about, and during one of my goings and comings, I suddenly found myself confronted by a foot soldier of the enemy who wore a green turban, which I believe indicated that he claimed descent from the "Prophet." As I approached at a canter, he had just planted a green standard about fifty yards in front of a battery he was evidently serving with. He cried out in the most defiant Hindostanee, "Come on with your tulwar." I had only a regulation infantry sword, and I had not been trained to fight on horseback, but I could not shirk such a challenge. So drawing my sword, I put spurs to my horse and rode for him as hard as I could. Just as I reached him, I made my horse swerve in order to knock him down, and he cut at me at the same moment; but in trying to avoid my horse by a sort of jump to one side he stumbled and nearly fell, and before he could "right himself" my Sowar Orderly, who was behind me, finished him with his lance. I was not very proud of this achievement, so I kept it to myself at the time.

In one of my gallops to and fro during this action I came upon the place where the surgeon of the 2nd Battalion Rifle Brigade was patching up the wounded. A young lieutenant who had been hit in the foot had just had one of his toes amputated, which the surgeon threw from him as

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

he finished the operation. Almost before the toe had reached the ground a big kite—of which many were then flying about—swooped down, and the young officer had the excitement of seeing his toe carried away into the air to be devoured at the kite's leisure.

After all Sir Hope Grant's actions in Oudh, it was my duty to make a sketch of the ground fought over, showing its features and all the movements made by the troops engaged. It was after this action—and we had many whose names even I now forget—that I saw the largest number of the enemy's dead whilst I was engaged in making my plan of the position that had to accompany the general's despatch to Army Headquarters. It was no easy matter to make a plan that Sir Hope could fully understand. Like many whom I have known, he found it difficult to take in the features of ground from a military sketch. I was a very fair draughtsman, and often, when I took him any such sketch, he would turn it in every direction, but I do not believe he was ever able to fully follow upon it the movements shown there which had been made by his own orders. When he was a young officer, very few were ever taught to sketch ground or to make even the simplest military survey.

By far the ablest native ruler I met in India was Maun Singh, an Oudh talookdar of great importance and wealth. About thirty years of age, and very cunning, he was careful to be always on the winning side. When he fully realized that the Mutiny was a failure, he became loyal, a policy that so incensed most of the other great Baiswarra zameendars that they besieged him in a strong fort he owned near Fyzabad. After the siege had lasted some time he applied to us for help, saying he was running short of provisions.



## MAUN SINGH

To help a man of such importance, who was at least a declared friend, Sir Hope moved on July 22 from Newabgunj Bara Bunkée with the force he had kept at that place since the important fight there, which I have just described.

After a week's marching in the extremely hot weather of July, 1858, we reached Fyzabad. It stands upon the right bank of the river Gogra, and used to be a large city of great importance. The news of our approach had already broken up the bulk of the enemy's forces in the neighbourhood. Some had joined the Begum beyond the river, and about 8,000 had made for Sultanpoor, on the Goomtee, about thirty-five miles due south of Fyzabad. Four miles below the latter city, on the same bank of the river, are the remains of Ajoudia, the ancient Hindoo capital of Oudh. That river swarms with alligators. I have seen at least fifty, big and little, basking together in the sun upon its mud banks. When our advanced guard of cavalry and horse artillery reached it, we found several boats laden with sepoy's just pushing off for the opposite bank. A couple of our six-pounders opened fire, but did them no harm. There are some extremely old temples at the Ghat on the river, and I was shown a spot on the bank where the great Hindoo god Ram is said to have disappeared into the earth. Hooneeman, the monkey god, is worshipped here, and the numerous tamarind trees about the place are thickly inhabited by a species of large monkey, who are treated by the inhabitants with great respect. Sir Hope Grant insisted upon the lazy priests who crowded the place opening the temple where was the sacred image of this deity. They shilly-shallied until at last they opened the door, and, to the horror of the bystanders, we entered. In the middle was a block of

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

heavy black wood, *lignum vitæ*, I believe, which was supposed to represent the head and body of a monkey, but I could see no resemblance to any such animal in it. It was clothed in a garment of some rich stuff, and was decked with jewels and gold-mohurs. My general kicked it over, to the horror of the dirty fat priests about, who had worshipped, or pretended to worship, it since they were boys.

The next day Maun Sing paid the general a visit, accompanied by a younger brother, who was fat and jolly. Upon Sir Hope's return visit I had a good opportunity of inspecting his fort, but could discover no ruins made or other damage done to it by the enemy's fire during the siege he alleged he had sustained, in which however we had never believed.

Sir Hope Grant lost no time in collecting a sufficient number of boats to bridge the river Gogra, which is there about 500 yards wide. When good piers had been constructed upon each side, the actual space to be bridged was reduced to 470 yards. We secured seventy-five flat-bottomed native boats, of which two-thirds varied from about twenty to seventy tons in grain-carrying capacity, the remainder were smaller. Bamboo was largely used for the superstructure, and answered admirably, being both strong and light, elephants crossing it without danger or difficulty. The bridge took over five weeks in construction.

The enemy were in considerable force on the opposite or left bank, and had some heavy guns, but made poor use of them. A large sandy island had been left when the river flood went down, and to it our bridge was made under the protection of a post we established upon it. Our force only numbered between four and five thousand men, of which

## FORCE A PASSAGE OVER THE GOGRA

some 1,000 were cavalry and a battery of horse artillery. During the night of November 26-7, 1858, Gordon's Battalion of Sikhs were ferried over above the bridge with orders to advance and take the enemy in flank when the first gun was fired in the morning. Before it was light the bridge was crowded with troops making their way to the northern bank, and as soon as day broke our guns opened fire, and Gordon's Sikhs advanced. This double attack, in front and on flank was too much for our enemy, who retired, carrying off all their guns but one. The land upon the enemy's side near the river was very deep for a couple of miles, being flooded every year in the rainy season, and we had some trouble in getting our guns over it. By the time that our cavalry and horse artillery had reached sound ground, the enemy had a considerable start of us, but Sir Hope lost no time in following them up. Our cavalry and horse artillery pursuit extended to about twenty miles, at which distance all our horses were well pumped. We took six guns, and the enemy must have felt there was no use in attempting to fight us. I rode my horse to a standstill, and when we turned towards camp I was compelled to abandon him, for I regret to say he was completely foundered. I had to get back to camp with my saddle and bridle on the limber of the horse artillery battery we had with us, and I confess that twenty miles on such a springless conveyance across a country abounding in banks of from two to three feet high, was about as fatiguing a journey as I ever made. In crossing those banks we broke several, if not most, of our spare wheels, as in descending the far side of each bank the spare wheel, being carried in a vertical position, was frequently caught by the edge of the bank as the limber dropped down the bank on the opposite side.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

I had a lengthened conversation with the horse artillery gunner on the limber-box beside me. He began by trying to frighten me, a favourite amusement with a soldier when he has the opportunity of trying it on with some one whom he regards as young and inexperienced. He described the horrible accidents he had seen when Horse Artillery had been obliged to cross banks "just like this one, sir," as we bumped over one of the many that fell so plentifully in our way upon that occasion. He did it cleverly, for his imagination was decidedly vivid. When at last he suddenly discovered that I was "drawing him out," and that instead of looking horror-stricken my face wore an amused expression, he "shut up," and we talked upon other subjects during the rest of the journey.

This was the longest cavalry pursuit I ever took part in, and all ranks were very glad that our little force did not move again for some days. Indeed, the horses required a good rest after it.

We had heavy torrential rains at Fyzabad the end of July and beginning of August, 1858. They cooled the air, but rendered the country cart tracks, I must not call them roads, well-nigh impassable, and they made even the small rivers unfordable. It was not therefore until the 7th of the latter month that any detachment could be made from our force at Fyzabad to drive the enemy from Sultanpoor as ordered by Lord Clyde. That city is about forty miles due south of Fyzabad. Brigadier Horsford was sent in command of the column employed. A brave man and a charming companion, full of wit and with plenty of ability, he was not, however, a keen soldier in the field, and this species of employment in the rainy season was not much to his taste and did not accord with his habits. He liked his

## MARCH UPON SULTANPOOR

creature comforts, and home service suited him better than the rough-and-tumble, temper-trying mishaps of a campaign in India. He found the enemy prepared to oppose his passage over the Sye, on the south bank of which Sultanpoor stood. That river had become wide, deep and rapid from the recent rains. Not thinking he was strong enough to force a passage, he did nothing. The gift of imagination in war's affairs had not been bestowed upon him at his baptism. His force was small and the enemy were numerous and well provided with guns. He therefore sent back to Sir Hope Grant for orders. The latter, the keenest of soldiers, whom neither heat nor rain could stop, thought he had better go there himself, and accordingly started for Sultanpoor with the movable column then at Fyzabad.

We took with us two heavy guns and four 8-inch mortars, which increased the difficulty of our march over flooded tracks into which our wheels sank often to the axle. But the elephant, that most intelligent of beasts—and most useful also when you can feed him, managed to pull and push these heavy pieces over all the worst parts. It is a pleasure to watch the cleverness with which they apply their great strength upon such occasions.

In August, 1858, Sir Hope Grant's division moved to Sultanpoor, which is on the southern bank of the river Goomtee, and about thirty-seven miles nearly due south of Fyzabad. We had some skirmishes with the enemy near the river, which is there about 200 yards wide, and runs with a swift current at that season. All the boats had been removed by the enemy, but we found a few rotten "dug-outs," which the enemy had sunk as useless and not worth the labour their destruction would entail. With these some rafts were made, and upon them we crossed, men, guns and

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

stores. The horses were swum over very cleverly by the men of the Punjaub Regiment, and of the large number thus crossed over we only lost two. The enemy attacked us as soon as we had formed on the other side, and of course they got the worst of it. The following morning, August 29, we advanced at the first glimmer of daylight upon the position the enemy had occupied the evening before, but all had bolted.

When in the neighbourhood of Sultanpoor I heard many stories of babies having been stolen by wolves and suckled and reared up by them. I had previously read of this in Sir William Sleeman's interesting book on Oudh, so I assume it was a well authenticated fact. If so, the legend handed down to us by the Conscript Fathers about Romulus and Remus, which many have ridiculed for twenty-six centuries, may well have been true at a time when wolves flourished in the valley of the Tiber.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### The Baiswarra Campaign in the Winter of 1858-9

THE Baiswarra district of Oudh may be said to lie between that part of the river Goomtee on the north, which is between Lucknow and Sultanpore, and that part of the Ganges on the south that is between Cawnpore and Allahabad. According to the information supplied us by the civil authorities, there were about 60,000 men in arms there, exclusive of the mutinous sepoys, and there were some 300 guns of sorts distributed amongst its many forts. A very large proportion of the Bengal native army had always been recruited there. The whole district was owned and ruled by great talookdars, who resided in strong forts, from which they governed their respective districts in true feudal fashion. Amongst them, Beni Mahdo, of Roy Bareilly, Lall Mahdo, of Ametie, and Maun Sing—whom I have just mentioned—were the most powerful. The forts in which they lived were places of considerable strength, surrounded with ramparts and one or more deep and often wet ditches, outside of which again was a dense and impassable jungle. It consisted partly of bamboo, but mostly of thorny bushes, that made all passage through it extremely difficult.

These forts were all of the same character, though

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

differing much in size and importance. The three we took, Amethie, Rampoor-Kussia and Shankerpoor, were the largest and of greatest consequence. The space enclosed by the outer line of works in each was from 200 to 250 acres. Their trace was irregular, but in a rough way approached that of the square. In none that I saw were there any re-entering angles nor any provision made in their general outline for an effective flanking defence. Their designers apparently considered the large, high, and solidly built towers in the *enceinte*, which were well provided with guns of many calibres, would answer all purposes. Their parapets had a profile of from ten to eighteen feet thick of curiously strong clay that resisted well the fire of the only heavy guns we had with us.

Between the lines of works and for several hundred yards beyond the outer ditch was a thick and practically an impenetrable jungle of thorn bushes and bamboos. After we had taken these places we could not get through this jungle, nor even along its inner edges to sketch the works, so dense was it and so formidable were its thorns. The interior line of works was usually quadrilateral and had substantial circular bastions at each corner, and if its size was great there were others on the faces also ! It generally had a considerable command over the outer works, and its guns in many places could range even well over the surrounding jungle and ground beyond it.

Every able-bodied man in each of these districts was compelled by custom to fight for his feudatory chief whenever required to do so, and I may truthfully say that England had not a friend in any part of this wide and wild Province. The defenders of these forts had no rifles, and their musketry fire was contemptible. Although they were



## SIR EDWARD WETHERALL

well furnished with good brass guns their ammunition was bad, and they did not know how to use artillery effectively. Here I had the greatest satisfaction of being once more associated with Brigadier-General Sir Edward Wetherall, whom I had known in the Crimea. He was in command of a column, and was one of the few first class men we then had in any important command in Oudh. But although a thorough soldier in every respect, well versed in the science and practice of his profession, and all round an able commander, he was not a favourite with either Lord Clyde or with General Sir William Mansfield, the chief of the staff. It was to me, however, always a pleasure to be associated with one who so thoroughly knew his work, and who could explain so clearly to others what he wanted done. Sir E. Wetherall was one of the ablest and best generals I ever served with.

We did little during the months of September and October, 1858, beyond taking and destroying some of the important forts that belonged to the landowners in the Baiswarra district. They were all of the same character, and were mostly deserted because their owners knew they were not strong enough to resist us.

On November 3, 1858, Sir Hope encamped within about six miles of Rampoor Kussia, a strong fort on the Sei River, that belonged to a Rajah of doubtful character. Lord Clyde had arranged that whilst General Wetherall attacked it on November 4 from the south, Sir Hope Grant should do so from the opposite direction. To our astonishment, however, we heard some heavy firing in its direction early on the 3rd, soon after we had encamped, and before long a kossid arrived with a letter written in Greek character. As an instance of how little the ordinary schoolboy's know-

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

ledge of that tongue lasts with him, I may mention that it was only with much fumbling hesitation that my staff colleagues, Major, afterwards Sir Henry, Wilmot, Captain, now General, Sir Robert Biddulph, and I were able to make out its meaning. The message was to say that, without intending it, he had come to close quarters with the enemy, and not wishing to retire from the contest to which he was thus unintentionally committed, he felt obliged to assault the place. He therefore asked Sir Hope Grant to co-operate and attack the enemy, who were already retreating up the river Sei.

Sir Hope, taking with him the cavalry and some horse artillery guns, started as soon as possible; but we were too late to do anything. In taking this strong fort Wetherall had lost seventy-eight killed and wounded, but by attacking before every bolt-hole had been closed to the enemy, as the Commander-in-Chief had planned, he had won Lord Clyde's eternal enmity. Lord Clyde was not a forgiving man towards those whom he did not class as his personal friends, and Wetherall had never been one of them. Besides this, he had a great predilection for combined movements, for which great exactitude as to time and the pace of marching were essential. This made him all the more furious with those who did not play up to the somewhat complicated plans of operations in which he delighted.

In our cavalry pursuit after Rampoor Kussia, one of the 1st Punjaub Cavalry, when rifling the body of a sepoy whom he had killed, found upon him two English miniatures. He gave them over to his commanding officer, who, dining that evening with Sir Hope Grant, mentioned the circumstance to him. Sir Hope, fond of art, expressed a wish to see them, and when subsequently shown them found they were the

## AMETHIE

likenesses of his father-in-law and mother-in-law, whose house had been looted when the Mutiny broke out.

In the combined operation against Amethie, Sir Hope Grant had been ordered to take up a position in some well selected spot about two miles to the north-east of it. Whilst the camp was being so formed, he went forward to reconnoitre the enemy's works, and was greeted with some round shot. Lord Clyde had at the same time pitched his camp about three miles to the eastward of it. Receiving a message that the Commander-in-Chief wished to see him, Sir Hope started with a squadron of native cavalry as an escort, taking me to show him the way. We found his Lordship in by no means the best of humours and inclined to find fault with every one. When he paused in his ejaculations, Sir Hope said laughingly, but perhaps with the intention of paying him off in his own coin, that he had come from the vicinity of the enemy's position straight into the Commander-in-Chief's camp without having seen an outlying picket or even a sentry until he saw the sentry over Lord Clyde's own tent.

Lord Clyde's anger was unbounded at this news ; the thrust had been well planted on my general's part, for Lord Clyde specially prided himself upon having all duties, especially those of outposts, well and promptly executed by his own immediate surroundings. But here, in close proximity to the enemy, Sir Hope, the best outpost officer in his army, had penetrated to his very tent with a squadron of cavalry without having encountered a picket of any sort ! It was too much for him. He sent at once for the Brigadier commanding his cavalry, and poured forth upon him the vials of his wrath in the broadest of Scotch, shaking his fist at him as if he would have killed him. This Brigadier was

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

not generally regarded as a Solon or a Caesar, and owed his position in the Army solely to the purchase system and not to either ability or military experience. But, we all asked, how was it that the Commander-in-Chief had not found this out before ?

During most of November and the early part of December, 1858, we were engaged in this Baiswarra district, pursuing the scattered forces into which the mutineers had then separated. We killed large numbers of them, and at last drove them, together with the Nana and the still more inhuman monster his brother Bala Rao, into the Nepaul jungles.

In pursuit of these two men, we reached Bulrampoor the middle of December, 1858. It was a small town with a fort, about fifty miles due north of Fyzabad, and only a few miles south of the pretty river Raptce. It was a well kept fort belonging to a rajah who had behaved well throughout the early period of the Mutiny, when all Oudh was against us. He was a very active man, about thirty-five years of age ; he rode remarkably well, was cheery and modest. He had saved several poor British fugitives during the awful days when desponding native loyalists began to think our rule had come to an end for ever. From him we learnt that the Nana and his brother, Bala Rao, had taken possession of the old fort of Toolsepoore with eight guns and a large armed following. That place was about eighteen miles to the east-north-east of us.

We had then a small column operating in the Gormkpore district under a stupid Brigadier. His movements were so slow that the force he commanded was commonly known as the "Hackery Brigade." The only British troops with him was a battalion of the Somersetshire Light Infantry

## LORD MARK KERR

under a remarkable man, Colonel Lord Mark Kerr. He was able but flighty, and amongst other peculiarities he entertained a sovereign contempt for his Brigadier, who was a weak old Indian fossil entirely unaccustomed to the control or management of British soldiers, and absolutely unfit for any independent command on active service. The two men had no ideas in common, and their temperaments differed as much as the climate of Iceland from that of the Gold Coast. Numerous misunderstandings arose between them, until at last Lord Mark telegraphed to know if he might put his Brigadier under arrest !

Sir Hope Grant sent this Brigadier orders to take Toolse-pore, but he completely failed in the attempt, as Lord Mark Kerr would give him no effective help. Sir Hope then ordered the Brigade to join him, and I was sent out some miles to meet it. When I saw the dust of its column in the distance I halted to let the advanced guard come up. The first figure I made out was a man on horseback without a hat but with a white umbrella over his head. He carried in his hand a light infantry shako, and he rode without stirrups. His horse was a good one, and he sat it like one who was no stranger to the saddle. I had often seen him during our last year's stay in the Crimea, and had there heard amusing stories about him. He was eccentric by nature, and wished the world to remark upon his eccentricities. He was a very well read man, full of talent, and had his regiment in first-rate order, though he ruled it as an absolute monarch, and was consequently often "in hot water" with the military authorities. Subsequently I came to know him well : to admire his talents, to forget his peculiarities, and to like him for the goodness of his heart. Taking it altogether, this "Hackery Brigade" on

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the march was a curious sight and amused me and others intensely.

Shortly after these events Sir Hope Grant, taking his Staff with him, returned to Lucknow.

In the early months of 1859 the adjutant-general of the division, now General Sir Robert Biddulph, and the judge advocate-general, the late Colonel Sir Henry Wilmot, Bart., and I had just settled down comfortably in a good house at Lucknow, when Sir Hope Grant received an order from Lord Clyde to retake the field. I had gone to Cawnpore for the first few days' leave I had had since I left home, in order to see a young brother—now General Sir George Wolseley—who was to pass through that station on his way to join his regiment in the Punjaub. I had only time to say "How are you?" and "Good-bye" to him, and then to hurry back to catch Sir Hope before he left for Fyzabad on April 12, 1859. From Lucknow to that ancient city is about ninety miles, which distance we did in three long marches. We embarked at Fyzabad in a small craft and dropped down the river Gogra some fifteen miles to where our horses had been previously sent forward. A brisk canter took us to Amorha, where we joined the force with which Sir Hope was about to operate.

In the spring of 1859 we marched through a great variety of country between the Ganges and the Nepal Mountains. We crossed many rivers, small and big, and in many places the scenery was exceedingly beautiful. The valley of the swift running Raptée is very fine from an artistic point, and is exceedingly picturesque where it winds round an important lower spur of the mountain range that is the watershed between the great Bramapootra and the Ganges. The lower sides of these mountains are well

## THUGGEE AND INFANTICIDE

covered with timber, but those forests were uninhabited, being the hotbed of malarial fevers. Into them we at last drove the remnant of our mutinied sepoy. The level district to the south of these lower mountain slopes is one where Thuggee had been extremely common. Men were murdered for the sake of the few annas they were supposed to have about them. Female children were often murdered by their fathers who wished to save themselves the expense of providing them with marriage portions when they grew to women's estate. Altogether, it was a country wild in its natural characteristics and inhabited by a people that were little influenced by the humane principles that are common amongst Christians.

There were said to be in the Toolsepore neighbourhood and in the Nepaul jungles north of it about 50,000 rebels, of whom one-half were mutineers of the late Bengal army. They were close to our frontiers and in a condition of abject want, and had become a great source of anxiety to Jung Bahadoor, for being high caste Hindoos he dared not adopt coercive measures towards them. They still had a large number of guns, and the Nana and his infamous brother, Bala Rao, was with them.

Upon revisiting Bulrampoor the first week in May, 1859, Sir Hope Grant received letters from both those brothers. The younger brother, Bala Rao, wrote humbly declaring he had murdered no European, and in the Queen's proclamation it was promised that those whose hands were clean in that respect would be dealt with leniently. The Nana's letter was couched in a very different tone. He abused our East India Company, and boldly asserted they had no right to the country, nor to proclaim him an outlaw.

There was nothing for it but to cross the Nepaul frontier

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

and disperse this force of mutineers and the crowd of bad characters from Oudh who had joined them. We were engaged in this unpleasant work for about a week. It was a curious sensation finding oneself opposed to men dressed in scarlet coatees. In some places we had to leave our horses and clamber up the hillsides as best we could. We found several women and children in the last phase of starvation, and also the bodies of others who had evidently died of want. Sir Hope Grant, with that kindness of heart and Christian spirit that distinguished him, did what he could to help these poor creatures, a line of conduct that greatly astonished those whose lives he saved.

On May 21 we had some considerable skirmishing up the sides of these hills under a dropping, badly-aimed fire from our red-coated enemy. We occasionally came to fairly close quarters with them, but their ammunition had not been improved by the damp jungle climate, and beyond wounding Sir Hope's aide-de-camp, whose life was not deemed of much value by any of us, they hurt very few of our party.

Two days afterwards, on May 23, 1859, we had our last skirmish with the mutineers of the Indian army, and I think I may note that date as the end of the great mutiny that had for a time so seriously shaken our power in Asia.

Very shortly after these events, I returned with Sir Hope Grant to Lucknow and resumed my ordinary staff duties there.

And so ended the mutiny of the Bengal Army. It abounded in examples of British heroism, of which our race has every reason to be proud.

It was a period of storm and stress, of horrors and of glory. Its history abounds in military events of



## END OF THE MUTINY

transcendent national importance, and in brilliant instances of individual prowess. Surely, a great fighting reputation is a most valuable item when we estimate the strength of any State. The self-sacrifice in the cause of country and in the maintenance of our wide Empire which fills the history of the Mutiny, should be learnt by every British schoolboy. Without doubt, the splendid daring and heroism of our countrymen of every class throughout that awful period will never be forgotten by the natives of India. In a land where reading is a rare accomplishment, and where books are few, such stories are more carefully handed down from father to son than in the noise and busy turmoil of European civilization. But even during profound peace it is essential that the millions of our fellow subjects in India should always have before their eyes an army of British soldiers as the outward evidence of Britain's strength. It will not suffice to tell them we are strong in Europe; all classes must see for themselves our strength in India if we mean them at all times to fully realize our power.

Putting upon one side all consideration of humanity—for it did not enter into his religion—the line of conduct adopted by the Nana throughout the Mutiny was the extreme of folly. Had he been really clever he would never have allowed the atrocities perpetrated at Cawnpore to have been committed. The wise rebel ruler would have released the British officer upon parole not to serve in India for say two or three years, and he would have shielded the helpless women and children who fell into his hands from all harm and insult. He might either have sent them down the river to Benares under a strong guard, or have kept them safe until he could have released them for a heavy ransom. Had he even killed the officers but spared the women and

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

children, how much better would have been his position ! That dreadful House of Blood and the Well by its door haunted every one who had seen it soon after the massacre. All the English troops employed in the two reliefs of Lucknow and in its subsequent capture had seen it when passing through Cawnpore into Oudh, and it was the remembrance of it that kept so long alive their craving for vengeance.

END OF VOLUME I.

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THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE



# THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

BY  
FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT WOLSELEY  
O.M., K.P., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., D.C.L., LL.D

*WITH PHOTOGRAVURE PORTRAIT AND PLANS*

SECOND IMPRESSION

VOLUME II

TORONTO  
THE BOOK SUPPLY COMPANY  
LIMITED  
1904

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## PREFACE

IN the following pages I have tried to record the noble actions I have witnessed, and to describe the men I have been associated with. I have set down nought in malice, and therefore beg my readers to forgive what may be my prejudices.

WOLSELEY, F.M.

FARM HOUSE

GLYNDE

*September 14, 1903*



TO  
THE RT. HONOURABLE  
LORD MOUNT-STEPHEN.

I DEDICATE THESE VOLUMES OF VARIED EXPERIENCES  
TO YOU WHO FOR FORTY YEARS HAVE  
GIVEN ME YOUR UNVARYING  
FRIENDSHIP.





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## CHAPTER XXVII

### China War of 1860

**I**N my narrative of the events of 1857 I mentioned that we had despatched troops to China early in that year for the purpose of enforcing our claims against its Government. When the Bengal Mutiny broke out, however, those regiments were diverted from the Canton River to the Hooghly, my battalion being one of them.

Our relations with the Pekin Government had not improved during the years 1857, 1858 and 1859. Being then seriously engaged in India, we were compelled to play a "waiting game" in China, and to content ourselves with some insignificant military operations in the neighbourhood of Canton, of which city we took possession. By the end of 1859 we had put down the Bengal Mutiny. We had re-established our supremacy from the Himalayas to the Carnatic, and could at last spare sufficient troops to bring his Tartar Majesty of Pekin to reason.

Sir Hope Grant's staff were naturally anxious he should be selected to command in the coming war, for we hoped and expected he would take us with him to Pekin. The only other man we could think of as being a serious competitor was Sir William Mansfield, whom the Army disliked extremely. His natural ability was undoubted, but it was not of the character that suffices to make a great military

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

leader, and he was known to be too short-sighted for practical work in the field. We assumed he would make every effort to obtain the chief command in this coming war, and that Lord Clyde would feel bound to support him in doing so. As we afterwards ascertained, both Lord Clyde and Lord Canning supported his candidature, but His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, then the Commander-in-Chief, very wisely, I think, preferred Sir Hope Grant.

About Christmas, 1859, news reached Lucknow that the Home Government had at last decided upon sending an expeditionary force of some 10,000 men to China with that object in view. The Emperor Napoleon III, being anxious to co-operate, it was arranged that he should send a French contingent of 7,000 men under General Montauban, who was then highly thought of in France.<sup>1</sup>

There is no nation, numerically as great as China, whose customs and modes of life are so generally common to all parts of their vast empire. To me they are the most remarkable race on earth, and I have always thought and still believe them to be the great coming rulers of the world. They only want a Chinese Peter the Great or Napoleon to make them so. They have every quality required for the good soldier and the good sailor, and in my idle speculation upon this world's future I have long selected them as the combatants on one side at the great Battle of Armageddon, the people of the United States of America being their opponents. The latter nation is fast becoming the greatest power of the

<sup>1</sup> Our quota was afterwards increased to 13,000. But the force eventually landed at Pehatang the beginning of August, 1860, consisted of 11,000 British and 6,500 French troops.

## ORIGIN OF THE CHINA WAR OF 1860

world. Thank Heaven, they speak English, are governed by an English system of laws, and profess the same regard that we have for what both understand by fair play in all national as well as in all private business.

The origin of the China War can be stated in a few sentences. Lord Elgin had patched up a treaty of peace with the Celestial Empire in 1858, and in accordance with its provisions we were entitled to have a resident Minister in Peking. This was generally thought to be the most important of the concessions we had obtained, and we were consequently anxious to take advantage of it. But to the Chinese rulers it was the most objectionable clause in that treaty. They had agreed to it on paper, but it was evident from the first that they never meant to allow us to take advantage of it. Had any worldly wisdom directed Peking diplomacy at this epoch, instead of flouting us, the emperor would have grappled us to him with "hooks of steel" by conceding all the just demands we had made upon him and his people. They would have tried to make friends of us in order to induce us to help them against the Tai-ping rebels, with whom they were themselves unable to cope. In May and June the aspect of affairs at Canton had already become serious for the Peking Government owing to this rebel movement. The most stupid amongst them should have realized that any attack made by us in the north of China would necessarily be of great help to the rebel cause in every province. The emperor was unable even to drive from the Yang-tse-Kiang Valley the Canton cooly who had set himself up at Nankin under the assumed title of "Tien wan," or "The Heavenly King"; and yet his Ministers deliberately acted in a manner that left us no alternative except a declaration

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of war! The Government of Peking, ever since we have had any dealings with it down to the present day, has always displayed a clever cunning in small matters of professional diplomacy. But as regards the treatment of all affairs of great international importance to them and to us, they have invariably acted as if they were idiots. Their rule is only to concede when concession has become unavoidable, and they are often unwise enough to refuse demands which common international custom recognizes as a matter of course. It was conduct of this nature that drove us, much against our wish, into this war. In fact, they brought upon themselves our occupation of Peking and the destruction of the Summer Palace. They are an inconsequent people, and it would seem as if their rulers never can learn wisdom from experience. If in the future they ever do so learn wisdom, they ought to become the most powerful nation upon earth.

Sir Frederick Bruce, then our Minister in China, announced to the Imperial authorities that he meant to proceed, via the Taku forts, to Peking, for the purpose of taking up his official residence there, in accordance with the provisions of our recent treaty. Shortly after this announcement he proceeded to the Gulf of Pecheli with a fleet under the command of Admiral Sir James Hope, a first-rate officer and the bravest of brave sailors. When, with several gunboats, he attempted to enter the Pei-Ho, the Chinese opened a heavy artillery fire upon him from the Taku Forts at the mouth of that river.

With more hardihood than wisdom our admiral, not content with returning this fire, landed a considerable body of marines and bluejackets on the deep mud which lay between the river and the most important of the forts

## SIR HOPE GRANT AS A GENERAL

on its right or southern bank. The attempt ended in disaster, and the landing party had to return to their ships, having suffered heavily, Sir James Hope being himself amongst the wounded. I have been told by men who were there that his cool courage was remarkable even amongst the brave men around him. When one gunboat was sunk under him, he went on board another and hoisted his flag there. I believe he was obliged to do this twice, two gunboats bearing his flag having been sunk one after the other. In this unfortunate affair four of our gunboats and one gun vessel were sunk, and our total loss in killed and wounded throughout the day was about 500 of all ranks. This very serious repulse made war inevitable, and we entered upon it with the least possible delay.

In accordance with orders from home, Lord Clyde had been told to select the general to command in the coming campaign, and also the officers required for the staff work in connexion with it. He wisely made choice of General Sir Hope Grant, who had distinguished himself upon all occasions when engaged during the great Indian Mutiny.

Sir Hope Grant's military instinct, mellowed by war's experience, invariably prompted him correctly. A soldier and a daring leader of men, he possessed keen, bright views upon war in all its many phases. He was a man of strong opinions and with plenty of ideas—and good ones too—but either from faults of education or want of practice in putting his views into words, he could not always clearly describe to others what it was he wanted done. There were men who, jealous of his invariable success and of his great popularity in the army, heartily disliked him, and consequently took a pleasure in belittling his capacity and in describing him as "puzzle-headed."



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

But they were by no means the best officers, nor were they ever likely themselves to be leaders of armies. Honourable dealing between man and man was in him intuitive. His faith in an all-seeing God, who watched over soldiers, was as the very life within him. His religion was of the simplest nature, though it was an all-powerful force that influenced all he did and all he said. He tried to serve God with all his might, but detested priestly dogmas and the sophisms of theology. Death had no horror for him : it would only come at the time God had appointed for it. A young aide-de-camp, to whom he was much attached, went to see him shortly before his death, and breaking down upon seeing the already pallid face of the general he loved, he burst into tears. Sir Hope said to him in his usual cheery way : " Oh, my dear boy, to die is nothing ; it is only going from one room into another." So it was to him then, and had always been in action, where no thought of personal danger ever seemed to occur to him. Upon many an occasion (when in action) those about him remonstrated with him upon his recklessness, he would laughingly concede the point and admit he was wrong, but within a few minutes afterwards he was again in quite as exposed a position.

When Sir Hope Grant was informed he had been selected to command in the war we were about to enter upon in China, I was Quarter-Master-General of the Oudh Division which he then commanded. I was a brevet lieutenant-colonel, and had already seen much active service. Sir Hope wished to take me with him to China as his Quarter-Master-General, but Lord Clyde did not approve, and I think he was right, for I had not had the experience required for such a position. He selected a much better

## EMBARK FOR CHINA

man in every way for it—Colonel “Jock” Mackenzie, of the Gordon Highlanders. No man knew the army more thoroughly, and no one in it was more conversant with the duties of the office he was selected for, especially in connexion with the embarkation of troops, in dealing with the navy, and in the feeding and housing of an army. He was also in every sense a thorough soldier, and the dearest and best of friends. His assistant was to be Colonel Robert Ross, of the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders, who had served under him at Balaclava in that same position, and I was to be the third man of the department. I had much to learn, and it was consequently of great advantage to me that I was to serve under two such able and experienced staff officers, by whom I was sure to be well taught. They were both old Crimean comrades of mine, who I knew thought well of me, and both were far older and had much greater army experience than I had.

Sir Hope Grant selected Lieutenant, now General, Sir Robert Biddulph, to be his military secretary. He had been for some time on his staff as adjutant-general of the Oudh Division. If I may presume to say so of an old comrade who is still alive, he was a first-rate man all round for that difficult and delicate position. No man could have filled it better.

We all embarked in the steamer *Fiery Cross* at Calcutta, and landed at Hong Kong March 13, 1860. During the voyage all of us read every available book upon China; I also played a good deal of chess with Augustus Anson, my old tent companion during our campaigns in Oudh. I had been a chess player ever since I was a small boy, and played fairly well. Sir Hope Grant, though a man of fifty-two years of age, entered into all our boyish amuse-

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

ments. He was a first-rate "cock-fighter," and beat us all at that game, and no one enjoyed the rough play of "High Cock-a-Lorum" more than he did. We were all very fond of him, and those who, like myself, knew him well, had a real affection for him. We took a delight in his daring courage, his indifference to self, and were proud to have him as our leader in the war we were about to undertake.

What a busy place Hong Kong then was. Its fine roadstead became day by day more crowded with transports, and its streets swarmed with all sorts and conditions of officers ashore for the day to see what John Chinaman had for sale. Every one in the Quarter-Master-General's department was busy from early morning to hot, dry eve. We had just negotiated for the purchase of some land on the mainland, a promontory called Kowloon, suited for camping purposes. There was no land on the island of Hong-Kong itself where troops could be put under canvas, and very little good drinking water was to be found upon its granite and freestone hills.

Captain, now Sir Peter Lumsden, one of our ablest Indian staff officers and I, were ordered to sketch the ground at Kowloon that was required for camping purposes. It is now part of our Hong Kong territory. There, all of us who had come from India, saw for the first time some practice with our new Armstrong breechloading guns. Their range and accuracy delighted us, and all regretted we had not possessed them during the Mutiny. We laughed as we thought how they would tickle-up poor John Chinaman in the neighbourhood of Pekin.

It had already begun to be warm in Calcutta when we embarked there, and we were consequently inclined all

## HONG KONG AND CANTON

the more to enjoy the refreshing breeze of the north-east monsoon during our stay at Hong Kong.

Canton was then in our military occupation, and I thoroughly enjoyed the trip I made to see it. When we took possession of it, we captured the Chinese mandarin who governed it and the surrounding province. He was a cruel brute, without any regard for human life, and ruled by fear. Asked by an English officer if it were true that he had that year executed 60,000 men, he thought for a moment, and then said: "Oh! I beheaded far more than that." We found in the city many walled-in yards filled with the skulls of those he had beheaded.

Practically we knew little and could not find out much about the north of China. Hitherto all the warlike operations we had ever carried on in the country were confined to the neighbourhood of Canton, Shanghai and the Chussan group of islands. As usual, our most difficult problem was the provision of enough suitable land transport. We raised an excellent Cooly Corps, which did us first-rate service throughout the ensuing campaign. Plucky, cheery and very strong carriers they were, easily fed and easily commanded. We obtained good muleteers from Manilla and bullock drivers from Madras and Bombay. All our Eastern possessions were in fact laid under contribution for camp followers of various sorts.

Our military force available for operations in the north embraced some regiments of Bengal Pandies and of Madras and Bombay Sepoys. What poor creatures they looked when seen side by side with the men of our other native regiments drawn from the fighting tribes of Northern India, the wild Pathans, the tall stubborn Sikhs, and the proud Punjaabee Mussulmans. The embarkation and the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

provisioning of these various creeds for the voyage to the Gulf of Pechelee was no easy task, and gave full occupation to all the officers of the Quarter-Master-General's department.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### Chusan and Pootoo—Talienwan Bay, 1860

ON March 8, 1860, our Minister at Shanghai had sent an ultimatum to the Pekin Government, in which he detailed what had taken place when he had last endeavoured, in accordance with the terms of our treaty, to land at the mouth of the Pei-Ho River for the purpose of proceeding to Pekin. Having described those events, he went on to say that Her Britannic Majesty's Government required the absolute and unconditional acceptance of the following terms: An ample and satisfactory apology for having fired upon our ships from the Taku forts, and the return of all the guns and ships we had abandoned upon that occasion; the ratification of our Treaty of Tien-tsin to be exchanged without delay at Pekin, to which city our Minister would proceed, going up the Pei-Ho River in a British vessel, etc., etc.; the payment of an indemnity for the injury we had received when our gunboats attempted to enter the Pei-Ho River, etc., etc.; the last and most important clause was that unless we received within thirty days of the date of our letter an unqualified acceptance of those terms, we should compel the emperor to observe the engagements he had entered into at Tien-tsin, and which he had approved by his edict of July, 1858.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

The reply arrived a couple of days before the time we had fixed as the limit within which it was to reach us. It came from the Chinese Commissioners at Shanghai, and not from the Great Council at Peking, as it should have done had the Imperial Court conceded to us the right we claimed of being treated by them as equals. On all other points also their answer to our demands was so unsatisfactory that Sir Hope Grant and General Montauban determined to begin operations at once by landing troops upon the Island of Chusan. This was a movement that had been directed from home, and a very stupid and useless one it was, for the Chinese Government attached little importance to it. The French and English fleets proceeded there forthwith, carrying a British infantry brigade, some artillery and engineers, etc., etc. The French sent a couple of hundred marines to represent their army upon this expedition. Sir Hope Grant was to command, General Montauban remaining at Shanghai. I accompanied Sir Hope in the *Grenada*, the ship we had hired from the P. & O. Company to be Army Headquarters whilst the war lasted.

In our previous war of 1848-9 with China we had occupied Tinghai, the capital town of Chusan, and had retained possession of it for a couple of years. We now anchored off that city and sent a flag of truce ashore to demand its surrender. This was at once conceded.

Mr., afterwards Sir Harry Parkes, an able, daring and very remarkable man, who spoke Chinese fluently, had drafted a proclamation to be posted up in Tinghai and in all the neighbouring towns, announcing our intended occupation of the islands, etc., etc. In it he had referred to the previous "British Occupation." Our sensitive allies asked us to change the expression to "European

## CHUSAN

Occupation," which was done as a matter of course to please them. They did not wish it to be officially remembered that we had ever made war in the Flowery Land without their assistance. How unlike us rude Britishers they are in all such matters !

A guard of fifty English soldiers and a like number of French marines landed and took possession of the city, our detachment being quartered in an old stone building we had erected as a hospital during our former occupation of the island.

The Union Jack and the French tricolour were hoisted side by side. Unfortunately the spar from which our flag flew was a few feet higher than the old Joss pole upon which that of France appeared. This could not be allowed, so a party of sailors from a French man-of-war soon appeared with a spar still higher than ours. Had we been nationally sensitive upon such a point we might have "gone one better," until the Tower of Babel would have been but a tiny erection in comparison with the height of those competing flag-staffs.

Here in Chusan, as is generally to be found throughout the length and breadth of China, literally every perch of land was cultivated and grew something that meant, in one shape or other, food for man. With this object in view, all classes are very careful in the collection of every species of manure that could fertilize their land. Even the narrow ridges which bound the canals were planted with beans and other vegetables. Clover and barley covered every suitable slope, whilst the ground that could be irrigated was rich with waving barley and brightly green with young rice. The steep and rugged hills were terraced everywhere to admit of cultivation, and the spots



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

whose apparent sterility or very steep declivities forbid all hope of crops were used as cemeteries. I must not call them places of burial, for except in the rich families, John Chinaman does not usually either burn or bury his dead friends or parents. His custom is to place them in strong substantial coffins, rectangular in shape, upon spots outside of cities, spots usually selected because of their otherwise valueless nature.

Tinghai, like most cities in China, was walled round, and was said to have 30,000 inhabitants. It contained the usual temples, rich, inside especially, with bright colours and good wood carving. Having been lately accustomed to the flat, ugly banks of the Woosung and Yang-tse-Kiang rivers, the scenery around the city gratified and soothed us with its varied shapes and colours. I carried away a pleasing remembrance of the place where Sir Colin Campbell, with his battalion, had so long been quartered during our first China war.

From Chusan we steamed to the sacred island of Poo-too, which lies eastward of and close to the Chusan group. It is regarded by all Buddhists as a very sacred place, and like the promontory of Mount Athos, no women are allowed to land upon it. Thousands of pilgrims from all parts of the empire flock there annually in the early spring, and again at the end of summer.

We were kindly received by the chief priest or abbot of the place, and were shown over all its temples and buildings. The wood-carving everywhere, though grotesque, was artistic and very good, but the roofs of several temples were sadly in want of repair. There were some finely ornamented bronze bells and gongs and immense urns, and also some parchment-covered drums scattered about

## THE SACRED ISLAND OF POO-TOO

the open courtyards. Everywhere the eye fell upon moral precepts painted on prominent rocks or richly carved on screens of hard wood, and everything was decorated with representations of the "Imperial Dragon." The two written characters most common in all the buildings were those which represent "happiness" and "longevity." In every temple was a statue of the Goddess of Mercy, who is, as it were, the patron saint of the place. The smell of burnt joss-stick pervaded every building, and in each was a notice forbidding the faithful to smoke within those sacred precincts. I there saw for the only time in my life a Buddhist priest in that condition of spiritual abstraction which lengthened contemplation of holy subjects and deep meditations upon the Supreme Deity is said to induce. The man whilst in that condition is supposed to have lost his human identity, and to have become for the time being an integral portion of the Supreme God Himself. The priest whom I saw in this state sat in a raised niche of the great gate into the principal building. I watched him in silence and somewhat in awe for certainly over five minutes, during which time he never moved or winked his eyelids, whilst his eyeballs, glazed over as it were with a film, looked hard and metallic, and seemed to be absolutely sightless. He never moved a muscle of his face or body as I watched him, and if he were not in an actual trance, he certainly was an accomplished actor.

There was at places a profusion of azaleas, peonies and other flowering shrubs. One of the three great temples of the island stood in a splendid grove of white camellia trees of from twenty to thirty feet in height. All were covered with blossoms, the fallen petals of which strewed

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the ground beneath. It was a lovely spot, and 500 men might have encamped beneath those tall, stately trees. On the whole, had it been desirable to have formed a sanatorium anywhere during the war, Sir Hope Grant would have done so upon this island of Poo-too, whose buildings of all sorts would have provided accommodation for about 2,000 men. Had this been done, he would have transferred to the mainland the few old priests who were the only permanent residents on the island. Having spent this one day, April 24, 1860, at Poo-too, we steamed away south for Hong Kong.

About the middle of May, 1860, our little army began to embark at Hong Kong for the Gulf of Pecheli. It consisted of two infantry divisions and of one cavalry brigade, with four batteries of field, one of horse artillery, and one of mountain guns, besides a small siege train of heavy artillery, the total strength of all ranks being 14,000. It was carried in 120 hired transports, and was accompanied by a fleet of seventy pennants, gunboats included. I do not think that England had ever before begun a war with so well organized an army. It was small, but nothing that could add to the health and comfort of our troops, or to their efficiency as a fighting body, had been neglected.

On our way north Sir Hope Grant called in at Shanghai, where we found every one in a state of panic. The rebels had lately captured the rich city of Soochow, and were then moving steadily towards Shanghai, which they announced their intention to take at all hazards. The Chinese merchants were already flying from the place with their goods and families. Most of the shops in the native city were closed, and where it was usual to find a large fleet of trading junks, scarcely one of any size remained.

## SHANGHAI

All trade had ceased, and alarm prevailed in all the country round. The European merchants realized the danger of the position, and at their request a battalion of marines was landed for the protection of life and property, to which a regiment of Sikhs and another of Punjaubees were subsequently added.

The governor-general of the province, a gentleman named Ho, now made to us the oddest request which the ruler of an invaded territory had, I presume, ever addressed to his enemy. He begged us to land and march upon Soochow and retake it for the emperor. He was kind enough to add that if we did this, he would inform his celestial master of the valuable services we had rendered, and he had no doubt that, as a reward for those services, we should be granted all we asked !

Three days' steaming took us from Shanghai to the Gulf of Pecheli, where we at once proceeded to examine the localities selected as the respective rendezvous of the two allied forces. That selected by the French was Che-foo, a small walled city about a quarter of a mile from the sea, and on the western shore of the gulf. The bay upon which it stood was small, but large enough for our ally's small force. There was not an over abundant supply of fresh water, but it was sufficient for all the French requirements. The land around, as usual in all parts of China, was well cultivated. The inhabitants were then busy gathering in the harvest, and preparing the land for other crops. No rice is grown so far north. At one place I saw two donkeys with a bullock between them yoked to a plough ! The French purchased there a number of good mules, of which many were to be found in the neighbourhood. Our allies were busy in putting together their tiny little iron gunboats which

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

had come from France as freight, each in fifteen pieces. When screwed together each boat, consisting of three water-tight compartments, carried a small rifled gun, but they were, I think, more ingenious in design than practically useful.

According to arrangements between the allied commanders, their forces were to be ready by July 1 to sail from their respective rendezvous in the Gulf of Pecheli.

We had landed our troops in Talienwan Bay, on the eastern coast of the gulf. Good fresh water was nowhere plentiful, and as we had a brigade of cavalry, and all our batteries had brought their horses with them, we required a great deal of it. We therefore distributed our brigades at several points. The country was wild and hilly, no trees anywhere. Well-flavoured oysters abounded along the rocky seashore, and were for a few days a great treat to all ranks. But they produced such serious stomach aches and bowel complaints, that their use had to be discontinued.

By printed proclamations distributed broadcast amongst the villages, we assured the inhabitants of good treatment, and gave information to those who felt they were ill-treated how they should act in order to obtain redress. When our huge fleet first arrived, the inhabitants fled inland, but—the women excepted—all returned in a few days. We bought their eggs, vegetables, etc., etc., and soon restored confidence. Our only difficulty was with our Chinese coolies, who were incorrigible plunderers. We flogged all we caught thieving, but it was impossible to keep them in order.

It took the French some time to obtain the mules they required even for the few small field guns they had with

## HEENAN AND SAYERS

them. Meanwhile we amused ourselves and our men at Talienwan Bay as best we could. Numerous excursions were made inland, and the people soon became accustomed to see us amongst them. There was, however, always an apparent dread lest we should at any moment suddenly develop into the "foreign devils" they even still in their hearts believed us to be. Every village had its watchman perched upon some point of vantage where he could see all approaching strangers from afar, and thus give warning to the community at large.

During our long wait for the French in Talienwan Bay, we received the news of the celebrated fight between Heenan and Sayers. It had been the one common topic of conversation amongst all ranks in our army for the whole previous month. The charming French officer who was attached to our headquarter staff as the daily means of communication between the two allied armies said he thought we had all run mad. That any civilized modern army, about to enter upon a serious war in an unknown country against an army of unknown numbers, should at such a solemn and important moment take an all-absorbing interest in the result of a vulgar prize-fight was, he said, beyond any foreigner's philosophy. I remember a leading article—I think it was in the *Saturday Review*—in which the writer, in describing the intense interest taken at home in this fight, said that if upon the morning after it the Archbishop of Canterbury had met the Lord Chancellor, the first question of that holy man would have been, "What do you think of the fight?"

We had from the first selected Pehtang, about eight miles due north of the Pei-Ho, as our landing place, and the French general commanding had fixed upon Chi-Kiang-ho

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

as the place of disembarkation for his army.<sup>1</sup> But General Montauban now asserted it would not suit owing to the shallowness of its waters. We suspicious Britishers imagined they had begun to think that their army was too small to operate far away from us. Be this as it may, after several conferences between the two generals respectively in command of the "Allied Armies," it was decided, to the regret of every Englishman present, that the two forces should land together at Pehtang. We established a reserve of stores at the camp we had just quitted in Talienwan Bay, leaving a strong detachment with it as a guard.

On July 20, 1860, the army having re-embarked, our great crowd of transports started under the protection of Admiral Sir James Hope's fleet of war ships. All were under sail in two lines, each line being led by a frigate. All told, it was a fleet of one hundred and seventy-three British ships. The French fleet, in all, thirty-three vessels, men-of-war and hired transports, joined us at sea, and formed a third line. It was the greatest number of ships I ever saw under sail together as one fleet, and was a magnificent spectacle, never to be forgotten. It was no mere naval review intended to amuse Cowes yachtsmen; it was an actual fighting reality; a man-of-war fleet conveying a huge collection of transports that carried an army of about 20,000 soldiers, with all their horses, guns, fighting material and food, for the invasion of a great and ancient, though little understood, empire. The distant Chinese capital, the far-famed Peking, the city of mystery

<sup>1</sup> The distance by road between Pehtang and Pci-Ho was twelve miles.

## ALLIED RENDEZVOUS NEAR TAKU

and of fable to all the yellow race, was our hoped-for destination.

We had a light fair wind, which sent us along about five knots an hour over a calm sea. The sun shone brightly upon our sails, and was just hot enough to make the shade enjoyable, the sky was clear and blue. Altogether, the colour and form, the light and shadow, and the sunlight on a sea crowded with sail-covered ships, made up a beautiful scene, a picture it is indeed a pleasure to recall. Who present could wish to be elsewhere?

We anchored the day following at the appointed rendezvous, and on July 30 moved in nearer the low-lying coast-line. On the 31st it blew hard, and the sea was so rough that we did not land until August 1.

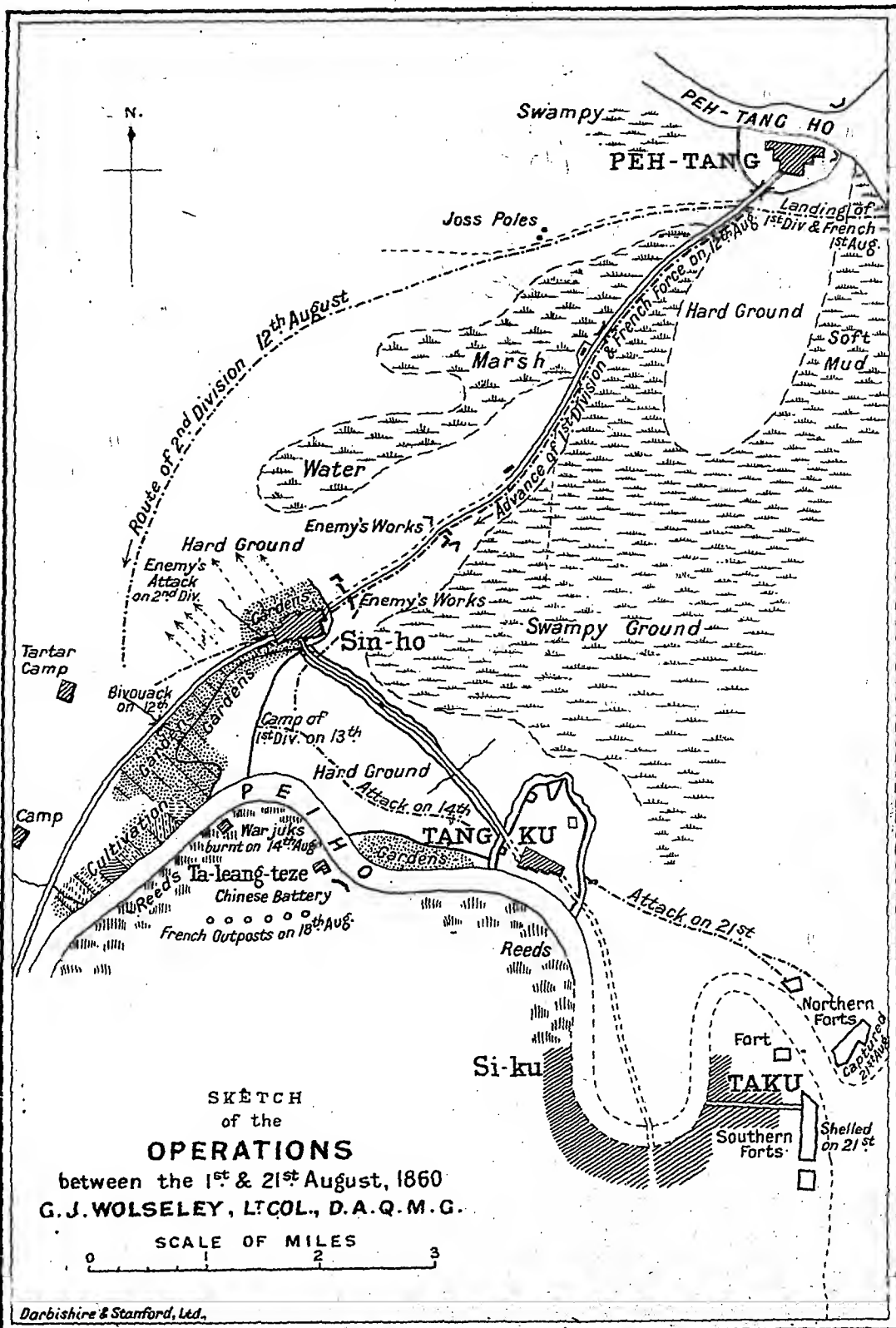
Before I proceed to describe our campaign in Northern China, I must refer to the fact, well known at the time on the spot, that our army was hampered throughout its course by the French contingent we had to act with. Experience has taught me how gallant and daring in action is the French soldier of every rank. Our military history abounds with the stories of battles where we learnt to respect him as an enemy, and to admire his pluck and his heroic endurance. My own generation stood beside him in the Crimea, and we saw him succeed there whilst we failed. I do not dwell upon the causes that led to our failure, but the fact remains that whilst we did fail there, the military ability and military aptitude and the superior strength of their army in the field, enabled the French to win all along the line. In China, however, we had a larger army than the French; indeed, we had to leave some of it behind to satisfy their susceptibilities by keeping strictly within the numbers we had agreed to place in the field. We



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

also possessed the great advantage of having at Hong Kong a good military and naval station well supplied with reserves of warlike stores to draw upon. The French had none of these local advantages, and their army had left France by no means well-equipped for war in a far-off Eastern country. We had long experience in such wars. They had none. Our alliance with France for this campaign in China may have suited our foreign policy for the time being, but the presence of this little French contingent with us in the field was a serious hindrance to our military operations throughout this campaign. In one of Sir Harry Parkes' published letters he wrote as follows on July 25, 1860: "This dreadful alliance is a very, very great reason for our devoutly desiring a speedy settlement of the question. They do us no good, and act, in fact, in every respect just like a drag upon our coach. *They use our stores, get in our way at all points, and retard all our movements.*"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Page 346, vol. i. of *Life of Sir Harry Parkes*, by Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### Army Lands at Peh-Tang, August 1, 1860

THE landing party consisted of General Sutton's brigade of foot, with a nine-pounder and a rocket battery, conveyed in large troop boats, each of which held fifty soldiers. All were towed ashore by two small gun-vessels. We soon came in sight of the high cavaliers in the shore forts, which at that epoch were always striking features in Chinese sea coast defences. Pushing on, the boats anchored under the mud bank of the southern side of the river about a mile below the forts. No enemy showed himself beyond what we should have called a couple of squadrons of mounted Tartars who kept near the gate through which leads the road to Sinho and the Taku Forts. There was about a mile of a deep muddy flat to be waded through immediately upon landing, so there was little of the pomp and circumstance of war about that operation. The first man to jump ashore and lead up the mud bank was the brigadier. He was an old campaigner well known for his swearing propensities, and famous as a great game shot in South Africa. I shall never forget his appearance as he struggled through that mud, knee deep in many places. He had taken off trousers, boots and socks, and slung them over his brass scabbarded sword which he carried over one shoulder. Picture a somewhat fierce and ugly bandy-legged little

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

man thus accoutred in a big white helmet, clothed in a dirty jacket of red serge, below which a very short slate-coloured flannel shirt extended a few inches, cursing and swearing loudly "all round" at everybody and everything as he led his brigade through that hateful mire. I remember many funny scenes in my soldiering days, but I never laughed more than I did at this amusing "disembarkation" of the first brigade that landed in northern China.

We had a cold, bad and wet bivouac that night. Neither tree nor bush to burn, and no fresh water to drink, for every calabash had been soon emptied in the exertion of struggling through the mud. Around us many marshy spots of dirty salt water, but not a drop to drink. In the middle of the night Major—afterwards Sir Henry—Wilmot and I started back on the mud in search of the Quarter-Master-General's boat, in which I knew there was a small keg of drinking water. After a long dreary and fatiguing march to and fro, we reached the bivouac, carrying the water keg slung on an oar between us. We met with a warm reception. During the night, Mr.—afterwards Sir Harry—Parkes the most indefatigable and most daring of men, together with an officer of the Quarter-Master-General's department, made his way unopposed into the town of Peh-Tang. The inhabitants said there were no soldiers there, so those two gentlemen broke open the fort gate, and soon returned to our general with the news. The people told them they suffered much from the Tartar patrols that frequently visited them. They hated these Tartars, to whom they referred in an "aside"—not intended to be overheard by Mr. Parkes—as "stinking more than you English do." We think ourselves a cleanly race, but we must evidently have to Chinese noses a strong "national smell" we wot not of ourselves.

## PEH-TANG

The next day and thenceforward until we finally left the place for the Pei-Ho River, our men were horribly crowded in Peh-Tang, having to share its limited accommodation with the French. Our Chinese Cooly Corps, some 2,500 strong, under Major Temple, did us most excellent service in landing our stores, etc., at Peh-Tang; but they were great rascals and difficult to keep in any order in a Chinese town like Peh-Tang.

On August 9 I was sent with 200 cavalry and 100 foot to reconnoitre the enemy's position in the direction of Sinho, a large village about six miles south-west of Peh-Tang. I made a wide detour with the cavalry, pushing on within a mile of the enemy's left flank at that place. I returned without firing a shot with the glad tidings that the line I had taken led over firm ground suitable for all arms, intersected with many pools of good fresh water.

We had some heavy rain during our hateful halt at Peh-Tang, a stay much prolonged by the French, who were slow in their disembarkation of both men and stores, through want of the necessary appliances. We all longed to get away from that town's muddy, filthy streets and stinking houses, so when it became known in the evening of August 11 that we were to celebrate our grouse-shooting festival of the morrow by an advance on Sin-Ho, every heart rejoiced. It is only through experience of the sensation that we learn how intense, even in anticipation, is the rapture-giving delight which the attack upon an enemy affords. I cannot analyze nor weigh, nor can I justify the feeling. But once really experienced, all other subsequent sensations are but as the tinkling of a doorbell in comparison with the throbbing toll of Big Ben.

The 11th August was a wet day, and the weather did

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

not look very promising at daybreak the following morning, but no rain fell. The plan of operations was simple. The second Division under Sir Robert, afterwards Lord Napier of Magdala, was to follow the route my reconnaissance had taken three days previously, whilst the first Division was to move along the direct causeway through the surrounding marshes. General Montauban strove his best to dissuade Sir Hope Grant from moving at all, as the recent wet weather would, he said, have rendered the country deep and his men would suffer much in traversing it. However, Sir Hope was firm and General Montauban gave way unwillingly, but with a good grace.

The second Division started on the 12th from Peh-Tang at 4 a.m., and took about three hours in filing over the bridge that led from the town into the open country. As I had sketched the route to be followed, I was sent with Sir R. Napier to lead the column. Great difficulty was experienced in getting its guns through the marsh outside of Peh-Tang and west of the direct road, owing to the heavy rains of the two previous days. The first Division had not cleared from the town until a little after 10 a.m., at which time the French began to move.

As we neared the enemy's works at Simbo, about 11 a.m., a large body of from 2,000 to 3,000 Tartar cavalry rode pluckily with loud shouts making for our right. The Brigadier foolishly, I thought, formed his Brigade into Battalion squares. Had he received this irregularly delivered charge in line, as he ought to have done, he must have killed a large number of his assailants. However, they were caught by our native cavalry, who, charging into the thick of them, killed many, and drove the rest back at as fast a pace as that at which they had advanced. The first Division, moving by the

## SIN-HO

road on the causeway, deployed when about 1,400 yards from the enemy's entrenchments, upon which both French and English guns opened at a range of 1,000 yards. From where I was with the second Division, I saw all this in profile. There was a considerable body of the enemy's horse round their main entrenchments who suffered severely from the enfilading fire of our artillery, which their jingalls and matchlocks in vain endeavoured to suppress. Indeed, their fire did us little harm. When the second Division had reached the firm ground about three miles from the Peh-Tang Bridge, it deployed into fighting formation, with the cavalry on its right, and its artillery were soon in action. The practice of our new Armstrong guns delighted every one—except the Chinese. The Tartar cavalry then advanced boldly toward us in very open loose order, and though each shell seemed to burst amongst them we could see few riderless horses.

No men could have advanced under such a heavy fire more pluckily than they did, and I could not help thinking what splendid cavalry they would be under British officers! They came on in scattered parties until fairly near our cavalry, when with a loud wild yell they charged with much determination. Our two native cavalry regiments, led by Major, now General, Sir Dighton Probyn, V.C., and by Lieutenant Fane, were upon them at a gallop in a few minutes, supported by two magnificent squadrons of the King's Dragoon Guards. This was too much for even those brave Mongols, who soon turned and fled. Our pursuit lasted for five miles, and was then only ended because our horses were "pumped." They were in no galloping condition, having been long on board ship. The enemy, mounted on hardy ponies in good working condition, kept easily ahead of our

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

horsemen. The French and English troops then advanced and entered the pretty little town of Sin-Ho. About two and a half miles south-east of it, on the road to Taku, stood the village of Tang-ku. A narrow causeway connected it with Sin-Ho, the country to its north being at some places very swampy and almost impassable. Between it and the Pei-Ho River to the south the ground was firm and good.

By a reconnaissance made next morning it was ascertained that all the Tartar cavalry had retired to the right bank of the Pei-Ho by which the road to Pekin passes.

In Sin-Ho we found some interesting letters from the celebrated Tartar General Sang-ko-lin-sin to the Great Council of State as to the plans we might be expected to follow should we land an army near the mouth of the Pei-Ho. He had evidently had our parliamentary discussions upon the proposed war translated. His minute upon the discussion in Parliament upon our proposed war with China is an amusing commentary upon our usual mode of proceeding in all such matters. He remarks that the fact of our having then said so openly in public that we meant to invade Northern China was a clear proof that we had no such intention. He added, "those who make war keep silent regarding their proposed movements: everything is talked over and done in secret, the drums are muffled and no flags are shown." He gave us credit for more public wisdom in all questions of peace and war than we ever display. He showed his own military wisdom by saying that "should the barbarians persist in the avowed intention of invasion, they will most likely land at Peh-Tang: to do this is very difficult, but as we cannot defend the place they may succeed. He then proceeded to describe the difficulties we should encounter, and did so clearly and ably. He predicted the



## TANG-KOO

course of events very much as they occurred, his only serious mistake being that he did not annihilate us, and that we chased from the field those whom he had commissioned to end our existence.

The next morning, August 13, I was sent out with some cavalry to reconnoitre up the river, but obtained little useful information.

The morning of August 14 was fine. We were under arms at 4 a.m., and the sky looked promising. The first few rays of the sun sparkled on our bayonets, and warmed us all pleasantly. The twelve French and twenty-four British guns opened fire upon the enemy's works round Tang-Koo at a range of about 900 yards, and soon silenced the fourteen Chinese guns opposed to them. Thereupon a party of the King's Royal Rifles, gallantly led by Lieutenant Shaw, contrived to effect an entrance into the place at the point where the enemy's works touched the river. Tang-Koo was soon ours, and the allied armies camped in and around Sin-Ho. This was a considerable success, achieved with little loss. There we halted six days to bring up the other heavy guns and ammunition we should require for the capture of the Taku Forts which defended the mouth of the river. It was in attacking them that Admiral Sir James Hope had met with his serious reverse in June the previous year, as already mentioned.

My work was constant in sketching ground, mapping the country, and making reconnaissances in all directions. This I enjoyed beyond measure. The weather was delightful, with cool, cloudy days and the nights sufficiently warm to make a bivouac pleasant. On August 16 I had been busy all day at some distance from the river. Upon returning to camp in the evening I found it under water from an unusually

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

high tide. Looking into my tent I found much of my extremely small kit floating about there. I did not enjoy my bed that night.

We now threw a bridge of boats across the Pei-Ho near Tang-Koo, half made by us and half by the French : a bad arrangement. It would have been much better to have drawn lots to decide which army should make it. A close reconnaissance of the Taku Forts was now made by the two allied Commanders-in-Chief. Sir Hope Grant was strongly of opinion that the capture of the forts on the northern or left bank of the river was the proper object to aim at. But General Montauban took the opposite view and pressed for the attack to be directed instead upon the great forts on the southern or right bank. I need not enter here upon any after-the-event discussion of the relative merits of the two plans. I content myself with saying that every member of the British Headquarter Staff agreed with our leader. By crossing the Pei-Ho to follow the French proposal we should place an unfordable river between us and our only base, that of Peh-Tang. But there were so many reasons for refusing to accept General Montauban's plan that I pass on, merely remarking that he thought it necessary to protest in a strongly worded minute of August 20 against Sir Hope Grant's scheme for the capture of the Taku Forts. In that document he said Sir Hope's plan was opposed to his ideas of the method of conducting this operation of war, and wound up as follows : " The object of my observations is, above all, to free myself from military responsibility with reference to my own Government in the event of its judging the question from the same point of view as that from which I myself regard it."

Sir Hope Grant answered it the same day, combating

## THE TAKU FORTS

General Montauban's arguments and adhering to the decision he had already arrived at.

Throughout this war the few troops furnished for it by France constituted a serious drag upon all our operations. We never derived any military benefit whatever from them, but I suppose the Ministers at home, who always have the best means of forming an opinion upon matters of foreign policy, deemed it advisable at that particular time to face the military drawbacks of the alliance for the international advantages it was hoped we should gain thereby. I spare my readers any learned exposition of the relative merits of the two plans for the taking of the Taku Forts. The matter is purely professional, and I shall only say that after a lapse of forty years I am as strongly of opinion now as I was in 1860 that Sir Hope Grant's plan was the true one, in fact the only sound one for that operation.

By the night of August 20 everything was ready for the attack of the northern fort—that nearest to us—which our general had selected as the key to the position. Sir Robert Napier—an old engineer officer—was of invaluable use to our Commander-in-Chief whilst these arrangements were being made, but the entire plan of operations was Sir Hope Grant's alone. With the eight heavy guns and three eight-inch mortars we had placed in position, and two Armstrong twelve-pounder batteries, two nine-pounder batteries and one rocket battery we opened fire at 5 a.m., August 21, the enemy answering with all the guns they could bring to bear upon our batteries. Amongst their guns were the two thirty-two pounders they had taken from our gunboats sunk upon the occasion of Admiral Sir James Hope's disastrous attack the previous year.

About 6 a.m., during what I may call the climax of the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

artillery fire on both sides, a tall black pillar of smoke and rubbish shot up as if by magic in the fort upon which our fire was concentrated. It burst like a rocket shell upon attaining a considerable height, scattering around in all directions a shower of earth, planks and other wooden débris. This was followed by a very heavy, rumbling, booming sound. A large magazine had been exploded by our fire, and for a few moments the firing ceased on both sides, the common opinion being that all further resistance there was at an end. But we had reckoned without our host, for soon the Chinese batteries reopened all round. Half-an-hour later another explosion took place, but this time it was in the larger northern fort. By 7 a.m. we had silenced all the guns in the fort Sir Hope Grant had selected for attack, and he now felt the time had arrived to assault it. He accordingly ordered two battalions—one of the Essex the other of the York and Lancaster Regiments—to advance and attack. They moved straight for the gate of the fort, a French column on our right advancing towards the angle of the work where it rested upon the river. It had been unfortunately arranged that a strong party of the Royal Marines should carry on their shoulders a small infantry pontoon bridge previously put together and made ready for launching upon the outer wet ditch of the fort. This was a stupid proceeding on the part of our engineers, for it not only increased our loss and somewhat retarded our capture of the place, but it blocked up the only good road for our assaulting column. A round shot or large jingall bullet tore open one of these copper pontoons as the bridge was being carried by our men, and when laid down on the edge of the ditch it could not be launched until the injured pontoon, etc., had been removed. I was in a stooping position, on my

## GERALD GRAHAM

knees, busy helping its removal, when I heard some one immediately behind me say something. Looking up, I saw it was Gerald Graham, V.C., of the Royal Engineers, the most imperturbable of men, and an old comrade of mine in the trenches before Sebastopol.<sup>1</sup> Much over six feet in height, he was riding a tall horse, and to hear what he was saying amidst the general hubbub of shouts mingled with the noise and din of heavy firing, I stood up and put my hand upon his thigh to get my ear nearer to him. He said in the most ordinary tone, and without wincing, "Don't put your hand there, for I have just had a bullet through my thigh."

The rear face of the more northern of the two forts on the left bank of the Pei-Ho—that which we were attacking—was protected by two wet ditches twenty feet apart. Over them the road to the gateway of the fort passed by wooden bridges; that across the outer ditch had been removed, and the drawbridge over the inner ditch was "up." The gate itself had been recently blocked up with rows of strong timber, the ends well sunk in the ground. The parapet had been considerably thickened to "counter" what the Chinese deemed the mean advantage we had taken of attacking the rear instead of the front face of the work. The space between the two ditches was as closely planted

<sup>1</sup> I have more than once walked with him back to camp in the Crimea from some of our advanced parallels upon being relieved after a tour of trench duty, when from sheer laziness—it was a failing of his—he would make straight "across country" in the direction of the Middle Ravine picket. He preferred thus to expose himself to the fire of the Russian sharpshooters rather than take the trouble of following our line of trenches where he would have been screened from view. When with him upon such occasions I never relished the manœuvre, but apparently it did not occur to him that there was anything unusual in his proceeding.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

with sharply pointed bamboo stakes as the wheat stalks of a stubble field.

The scramble over those two ditches was no child's play under the shower of missiles of all sorts, from "stinkpots" to cold roundshot, with which the Chinese plied their assailants. Fortunate indeed was the man who in the foremost ranks reached the foot of the parapet unhurt. Some men ran along the edge of the ditch searching for an easy point of passage, but others more daring and following their officer's example, plunged at once recklessly into the muddy water before them which in the middle reached their armpits. Even in the midst of all the turmoil at the moment, shouts of laughter greeted the poor devil who had the bad luck to sink for a moment in some chance hole as he pushed across. What danger is there in which the British soldier will not have his laugh? The narrow causeway to the Fort Gate was soon covered with killed and wounded, and the garrison seemed determined to fight to the last. It was slow work thus getting over those two ditches. Busy as I was at the outer ditch, my attention was attracted by seeing an officer with his sword in his mouth swarm up one of the side posts over the top of which passed the rope which held up the drawbridge of the inner ditch. It was my late "chum" in the Oudh campaign, the recklessly daring Augustus Anson, M.P. He was soon high enough to hack with his sword—and it was always sharp—at the rope, until down came the drawbridge with a crash. It had suffered severely from our fire, still many were able to crawl over its shaky timbers. This was a plucky, an heroic, feat on his part characteristic of the man. He had already won the Victoria Cross.

## STORMING THE TAKU FORTS

Our assaulting column was 2,500 strong ; the French were to have operated with 1,000 men but did not furnish 500. They attacked on our right, and though few in number nothing could exceed their daring gallantry. It was well said upon that occasion that their conduct was "worthy of the great nation to which they belonged." Their Chinese coolie corps carried the French scaling ladders, and to get over the wet ditches dry-foot our allies adopted an ingenious and amusing plan. They sent a number of these coolies into the middle of the ditch, and using them as a pier upon which they rested the ends of their scaling ladders, thus made a bridge of two spans over it, along which they scrambled.

After much labour on the part of all engaged, a considerable number of officers and private soldiers of both nations were soon gathered together under the steep outer slope of the parapet that enclosed the face of the fort we were attacking, and every minute increased that number. All attempts made by the French to place their ladders against that slope were met gallantly by the enemy, who hurled back both the ladders and the men upon them. However, determined men always succeed in war, and as soon as one ladder was thrown down our gallant allies replaced it by another. At last, a French soldier reached the top, and, bounding upon the parapet, tricolor in hand, he had just time to wave it and to hear it greeted by his comrades with a wild huzzah before he fell and his brave spirit had passed away into that better world where the souls of all such noble soldiers doubtless live for ever.

The first of either army actually inside the fort were two young subalterns, Rogers of the Essex,<sup>1</sup> and Burslem of

<sup>1</sup> Now Major-General Rogers, V.C., C.B.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the Hampshire Regiment, but both were driven out again, the former wounded. Chaplin, a subaltern of the Hampshire Regiment,<sup>1</sup> carrying the Queen's Colour, was, I believe, the first to place any national standard upon the captured work: he was wounded three times in doing so. But both the soldiers of France and England did so well that it would be impossible as well as invidious to attempt to draw any distinction whatever between their respective daring. The Chinese within the work, when we had forced our way in, fought to the last, and both French and English bayonets were freely used before all resistance ceased. The interior of the captured work presented a horrible scene of dead and dying Chinamen. I believe its garrison had been 500 men, of whom only 100 effected their escape. The two Chinese generals within the place were killed, one being the general in command of all the works on the left bank of the river. The fort we had taken was the key to the whole position on both banks, and General Montauban that evening must have wished he had never protested against its being made the first object of our attack. The large Chinese work lower down the river on the same bank was undefended, and upon entering it we saw huddled together in one part of it about 2,000 Chinese soldiers who had thrown away their military badges and assumed the attitude of peaceable citizens. They expected to be killed and were astonished when we told them they might go free. We afterwards learnt that our clemency had a great effect wherever this proceeding on our part became known.

It had been a trying morning and afternoon to all of us, and to those good friends our horses also. But now, to make matters worse, the very heavens seemed leagued

<sup>1</sup> Now Major-General Chaplin, V.C., C.B.



## HEAVY DOWNPOUR OF RAIN

against us, and as one condition of that alliance to open their rain sluices upon the scene. I thought I heard the sound of their working machinery in the bursts of thunder which broke around on every side and shook the heavens and the earth as they did so. Upon me a very heavy downpour in every locality and under all circumstances has a saddening effect : at sea, on land, in the high mountains and amongst the abodes of men in well cultivated plains it is always the same. But there, in a deadly level mud-flat only a very few feet above high-tide mark, where no tree or patch of grass was to be seen, nor any abode of man beyond the low, flat-roofed mud dwellings of the peasant, this overflowing, drowning rainfall with its thunder chorus and its lightning accompaniment made most of us sad and weary. I know I felt poor at heart, and even the remembrance of our brilliant success that day was not sufficient to cheer me up.

In war, the weather certainly affects the spirits very much. Privations and discomfort in the fine weather of a soft pleasant climate have little effect upon the well constituted masculine mind and spirits. But wet clothes and damp surroundings and mud and dirt, with hunger and nasty food, soon convert privations which should be joy into sheer misery. As I stood wet, tired, sleepy and hungry upon the lofty cavalier of the larger of the two northern forts and looked around upon the surrounding expanse of mud and dirty pools, with a yellow river flowing through black slimy banks, I thought it would be difficult to find in nature any scene more essentially hideous. The road by which we had reached the forts was entirely submerged for long distances, and its few uncovered spots were deep in mire and slush. Even the most naturally cheery amongst us felt depressed, notwithstanding our victory, as we straggled back to our wet

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

tents. All of us had been up long before daylight, and had during the day eaten but little, and that little "on the thumb," as our allies would have said. With empty stomachs, very sleepy and both tired and weary, that ride of five miles back to camp is not one of my pleasantest recollections. The road—may I call it a road!—was so slippery that our tired and hungry horses could with difficulty keep their legs. Upon reaching camp I found it had been inundated during our absence, but that the flood was now receding. It had, however, overflowed the little mound a careful servant had raised round my tent to keep it dry. That mound now acted as a dyke to keep the water in and had converted my tent into a pond, some four inches deep. I shall never forget the sadness that fell upon me as I saw my pet pair of easy old camp shoes floating about that pond. On my dreary way, my feet clad in the saturated and clinging boots I had been in since 4 a.m. I had pictured to myself the luxury of changing them for those shoes which I calculated upon finding dry and comfortable. As I looked round my tent, here and there portions of less buoyant articles showed themselves above the flood, reminding me that most of my property was below its surface. The night was pitch dark. There was very little to burn and that little was saturated. No efforts could kindle a fire, indeed, it was with difficulty I lit the candle that stood in a bottle upon my camp table. I was hungry and devoured some ration biscuit and stuff from a tin canister that was labelled "beef." Wet through, with no dry change, but very tired, I lay down happy after this frugal supper, for had we not taken those far-famed Taku Forts!

I learnt next morning that the Chinese Governor-General, after a long conference with Mr. Parkes, had surrendered

## SURRENDER OF ALL THE TAKU FORTS

the southern forts and all the country up the Pei-Ho as far as Tien-tsin, together with that city itself. The end seemed—I thought then—fast approaching: but, like all those around me, I was wrong.

Writing home from Tang-Koo on August 24, 1860, I said what all then believed to be the case, that "the third China War is over, and all that we fought for in a military point of view is obtained." I give here a copy of the official sketch I had made of the general position and which I had had lithographed for distribution, previous to our attack on August 21. "You may perceive," I wrote in my letter, "that all beyond this village of Tang-Koo is dotted in on the plan, indicating that it had not been accurately surveyed, as this was impossible when I drew it. The other parts of the sketch I surveyed carefully and it was generally considered to be very satisfactory. Copies of it are being sent home to all the chief military officials by this mail, but as drawings of this nature done by officers of the Quarter-Master-General's department belong to the State, I do not wish any public use to be made of it.

"I wrote home from Peh-Tang telling you we were to begin operations on the 12th inst., as Sir Hope Grant was determined, come what might, not to run the great risks attendant upon keeping the large force we had at Peh-Tang cooped up in that small and unsanitary town. Although the French were strongly opposed to a forward move at so early a date, our general was determined to postpone the forward movement no longer. He told the French that if they were not ready to move by that date he should operate alone, as our force was sufficiently strong [to enable us to do without any assistance from them. Under these circumstances, General Montauban

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

was forced to comply, though he did so unwillingly, saying he would only send forward part of his troops.

"Two reconnaissances had been made of the enemy's position and of the ground near it: one was made by a French general on the 3rd, the other on the 9th inst., by 'Lieutenant-Colonel Wolseley,' the latter being, I flatter myself, the more successful of the two. From the information I collected and by marching over the ground myself, I found that at a few miles distance from Peh-Tang the ground was sufficiently hard for the movements of cavalry and artillery. Our Commander-in-Chief therefore determined upon turning the enemy's left with all his cavalry and one division of infantry, whilst the other infantry division and whatever force the French might supply should march direct along the causeway towards the enemy's entrenched position in front of the village of Sinho.

"Unfortunately the 11th was a wet day, but still our general was determined to move if possible on the following morning, so at 4 a.m. on the 12th we were all under arms, and filing over the narrow bridge which is the only outlet from Peh-Tang. I must tell you that a few hours of heavy rain make the whole country here impassable for man and beast. There is not a stone of any sort in this district, so the roads, which are all of clay, although good when baked hard by the sun, are impracticable for wheeled carriages when they are rendered soft by rain. The morning of the 12th was far from promising. The sky was covered with dark leaden-looking clouds, and a light drizzling rain fell now and then, so that instead of taking about a couple of hours to get all the force clear of the place, it took six, as some of the waggons having stuck irretrievably in the mud delayed every one in the rear, as a

## THE FIRE OF OUR HEAVY GUNS

matter of course, on that narrow causeway. It was very hard work getting over the first two miles of the route taken by Sir R. Napier's division, with which I was sent by the Commander-in-Chief, because I had a good knowledge of the country in that direction, having been over it during my reconnaissance on the 9th. With many a struggle my horse carried me through the mud for the first few miles.

"At about 11 a.m. we came into action, and Sir R. Napier's division was soon almost enveloped by clouds of the enemy's cavalry advancing steadily upon us in their own irregular fashion. They seemed to take little heed of the heavy fire we kept up on them from fifteen field guns, whilst about twenty more were in action on our left, pitching into the centre of their fortified position. These twenty guns were with the first division, with which Sir H. Grant then was. The enemy's cavalry came close up to us, and a few straggling parties even charged our cavalry and guns. Our horsemen were at last let loose, and, bursting in upon them, pursued them for about five miles. But as our horses were in bad wind from long confinement on board ship, we did not cut up more than a few hundred of them at the outside. Still, the impression of our superiority as soldiers was made, and they acknowledged it by their flight.

"The fire of our heavy guns with the first division soon told upon the enemy's works in front of Sinho, towards which the enemy began to retreat. When Sir Hope saw this, our infantry were ordered to advance in line, but upon entering the enemy's entrenchments we found only dead and dying men and horses. Our two infantry divisions and the cavalry brigade met close to Sinho, a nice little village surrounded by neatly kept gardens. Leading down from it in a south-easterly direction, was a long causeway with a canal on each side,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

at the end of which stood Tang-Koo, the village from which I write this letter. Around it, a long line of entrenchments had been constructed which covered it on three sides, the fourth side being protected by the Pei-Ho. General Montauban, evidently a little surprised at our rapid success, was now all for pushing on at once to attack Tang-Koo forthwith. But as the only road leading to it was the narrow causeway already mentioned, which was swept by the enemy's guns, Sir Hope most wisely refused positively to advance further until he had thrown bridges over the canals bordering it. They would enable him to deploy to the right or left as he might require. The ground between the causeway and the river was hard, and promised to be the best line for a further advance.

"General Montauban fussed and fumed so that at last our Commander-in-Chief said to him, 'Pray don't allow my refusal to advance at once to prevent your going on with your own troops.' The Frenchman jumped at the idea, and, accepting the offer with eagerness, soon put his troops—who by this time had come up—in motion along the Tang-Koo causeway, his artillery in front. When he came within gunshot of the enemy's works he began an artillery duel with the Chinaman at long bowls which he carried on for some time. The determination of our allies soon oozed out, and they returned before long, having done nothing more than expend some gun ammunition most uselessly. We all bivouacked for the night where we were; few had even a blanket. I had nothing but what I stood in, good cord breeches and hessian boots, which although the best dress in the world for day work are not, if made to fit closely, by any means the most agreeable costume for 'soft repose.' Close by where we bivouacked

## A CAVALRY RECONNAISSANCE

were immense stacks of hay and straw, so that after all neither I nor my horse fared at all badly. Indeed, until the heavy dews wet me through towards morning, I slept better than I had done for several days.

"The next morning—August 13, 1860—I was sent out with some cavalry to reconnoitre up the river, but I could obtain no information worth having. By the evening of the 13th all was ready or in train for the attack on Tang-Koo, and two bridges were thrown across the canals to enable us to get guns on to the firm ground lying to the south of the causeway leading to that place from Sinho. During the night a large working party threw up a trench at 480 yards from the enemy's works, which I have marked *A* in the plan. Thence we could worry John Chinaman well with our rifles. The weather, which had off and on been bad ever since we landed at Peh-Tang on the 1st until we left that place on the 12th, was now lovely; fine clear days with a clouded sky like that of England, thus affording good protection from the sun to those who were all day exposed to its rays: no ill effects were therefore experienced from that great Eastern enemy of Europeans. Our nights were just pleasantly cool, and when in a tent one blanket over you at night was comfortable. Strange to say, during our stay at Peh-Tang it rained regularly every third day, and the rule had held good also for some days before we landed. In consequence, many predicted that the 14th would not be an exception to this local law of nature, the 11th having been very wet. I am glad to say the weatherwise, and those who had formulated laws upon imperfect observations of nature, were wrong in this instance: their prophecies were delusive.

"We were all under arms about 4 a.m. on the 14th;

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the sky looked very promising ; the day dawned upon us bright and glad. The first few rays of the sun sparkled on our bayonets and warmed us all pleasantly. The sight was fine as day broke upon our preparations for attack, and was calculated to rouse the spirits of even the most phlegmatic amongst us. It is moments such as these that repay us soldiers for the many inevitable hardships and disappointments experienced in all campaigns, although they seldom figure in the published narratives of such events ; they are generally kept well in the background. They are ignored by the author, who wishes to throw a golden hue over the camp scenes he describes, and to surround the soldier's life with a halo in the brilliancy of which all that is disagreeable is lost to sight.

" Our troops were quickly in their places. With the guns in front we made up a total of twenty-four, and the French had twelve more. The French, who were on our left, rested their left on the Sinho-Tang-Koo causeway : we were on their right and rested our extreme right on the Pei-Ho. The troops of the two allied nations thus formed one long line, filling up the space between the causeway and the river. From the little village with the long name marked on the plan as having had some junks burned there, the Celestials opened their first fire upon us from a couple of guns : we replied with six, but did not succeed in silencing them for some time, and, before we did silence them, they had opened from another battery lower down marked *B*. A few of our sailors with a small boat managed to land near the first battery, and, finding it deserted, spiked the guns and set fire to the junks there, these last forming almost a part of the battery.



## OUR GOOD ARTILLERY PRACTICE

"August 27. I have been so interrupted and have so much surveying and drawing to do, that I have not had time to finish this letter before. All yesterday, from early morn until late, I was drawing; I had to make two large plans (four inches to the mile), one for His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, and the other for the Quarter-Master-General at home. Every moment not engaged in drawing was spent in surveying: everything had to be done against time to be ready for the post to England which closed here last night.

"I am the only officer at headquarters who can draw, so my hands are always full. Then dear old General Grant is a terrible man for plans and sends copies to all sorts of people. Fortunately for me I got the enclosed little sketch struck off in our press, and have thus saved myself much labour. It was, however, so badly done that making the necessary corrections in the copies struck off takes up a considerable amount of time.

"I shall now resume my narrative where I left it. After the Chinese batteries on the right bank of the Pei-Ho were well accounted for, and the French—who were late—had come up—the whole line advanced, the second English division remaining in rear as a reserve. The advancing line consisted of a line of battalion columns. When we had reached within about 1,000 yards of the enemy's entrenchments we opened by a heavy fire upon those parts of the enemy's works where their batteries were and from which they were firing upon us. Our artillery practice was beautiful; nothing could be better than the accuracy with which our Armstrong guns fired. Our skirmishers in the trench on our right did their best to pick off the Chinese gunners, but notwith-

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

standing all the uncomfortable missiles we brought to bear upon them, they still stuck to their guns like men ; although they made shockingly bad practice, their pluck was undeniable, and would have done credit to the best disciplined troops of Europe. On the extreme left of their entrenchments, where they rested on the Pei-Ho, the place we had selected for our attack, there was a Chinese battery which the long-tailed gentlemen served manfully until gun after gun was knocked over or broken by our heavy fire ; by degrees we advanced our guns towards the enemy's entrenchments until at last they were only about 400 yards from them. Our infantry was then brought to the front, and in about five minutes the Union Jack of England was flying from the top of the walls.

"Our assaulting column had to scramble over a wet canal with extremely muddy and slippery sides. Just close to the river there was a spot where the advance was made with greater ease ; at other places the ditch to be crossed in our front would have required bridges. Our allies the French were all this time pegging away with their guns at the gateway on the causeway. They had to throw a bridge over the two wet ditches which lay between them and the Chinese works. We were inside for a good ten minutes before the French tricolour was hoisted up and their firing had ceased. When we entered the place the enemy bolted ; some threw themselves into the river and tried to swim across, and a few succeeded ; others crossed in boats. The bulk of their force, however, was to be seen streaming along the causeway which I have marked on the plan as leading down towards Takoo, where they used to have a boat bridge across the river. We could do no more that day, as immediately beyond us lay the

## THE CHINESE MAKE SOME PRISONERS

strong forts, said to be impregnable, from which a heavy fire opened upon all who approached them.

"Sir H. Grant determined to await the arrival of his heavy guns from Peh-Tang, and to bring up ten days' provision before he moved any further from his base of supplies. This was very necessary, for in the event of bad weather our line of communications with the rear would have become impracticable even for horses, so easily is this extremely flat country flooded by even a few hours' heavy rain.

"I do not think I mentioned that during our advance on the 12th a few of our men who were straggling in rear were cut off by the Tartar cavalry. The party that fell into the enemy's hands consisted of two men of the British infantry, who were doing duty with the Chinese coolie corps, about fifteen or sixteen of these coolies and a couple of Madras sappers. Strange to say, these men, or rather most of them, were returned to us under a flag of truce between the 15th and the 20th. One of the English soldiers, the Chinamen said, had died, also one of the Madras sappers. The coolies had had their tails cut off and the English soldier sent back had evidently had his hands tied tightly with cords. His story was extremely vague: indeed, when his evidence was taken, he was still so much under the influence of excitement and fear that we could make nothing out of him. He said, however, that the other man had been killed because he would not go through the customary Chinese ceremony of kow-towing to the great mandarin when taken into his presence. This ceremony consists—as I daresay you know—in knocking your forehead nine times against the ground. This story of the soldier I believe to be untrue, the fact being that this party, who

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

were in charge of some rum kegs, having nearly all become drunk, began to straggle and were thus taken prisoners. One coolie escaped at the time, whose story corroborated this view of the affair : he said that one of the two soldiers had died from the effects of drink.

“From August 15 to 20 every one was busy at getting up stores from the rear. The road between the army and Peh-Tang was constantly covered with every sort of cart, baggage animals, etc., all struggling to the front with baggage, big guns, ammunition, forage, etc., etc. A boat bridge was begun at *D*, across the Pei-Ho, as the French were all for operating on the right bank of the river. When Sir Hope Grant announced his intention of attacking the north forts and taking them first, General Montauban was very wroth, doing all in his power to try and dissuade him from the operation. The whole French staff were also much excited on the subject, and propounded fine axioms and theories of war, to all of which, as also at last to General Montauban's official remonstrance against our proposed plan, Sir Hope Grant, to my delight, turned a deaf ear. His remonstrance really amounted to saying that he did not want the French at all, and was quite prepared to take the forts by himself. The French general could not, of course, agree to his doing this, so he replied that, ‘having placed his remonstrance against the English general's plan on record he was prepared to accompany and assist his ally with troops.’

“Up to August 20, my time was mostly spent in making reconnaissances, and in proceeding with my survey, which, extending over many miles of country, was a work of time and labour. Meantime all the civilian newspaper writers and other hangers on about the camp, amateurs and people of that sort, were daily crying out, ‘Oh, why don't we push

## CIVILIANS ACCUSE US OF DELAY

on'; 'the forts would fall at once if attacked'; 'You might take them with a hundred men'—and all sorts of similar rubbish in which those who have no responsibility and who take no part in the fighting themselves are always so fond of indulging. Always on such occasions they are ready with grumblings of this nature: even Lord Elgin, who joined the camp on the 19th, seemed to think our delay was absurd, so confident were all those supposed to be well versed in Chinese manners and customs that we should have no difficulty in taking the forts.

"Against all this clamour Sir Hope held his own, treating it with the contempt it deserved. It was a trying position to be placed in, with this growling crowd round him calling out for an immediate advance, whilst the French on the other hand condemned and protested against his plan of operations. Sir Hope stuck to his own original plan, and no man was ever better repaid than he has been for his firmness. On August 19 and 20 our engineers were employed in making the road leading out of Tang-Koo, which I have marked on the plan. It had to be taken across all sorts of bad ground, besides a great number of deep canals connected with the salt works surrounding the place. On the night of the 20th our batteries marked on the plan were thrown up, and the second division was moved down to be ready for work the following morning. The enemy kept throwing fire balls all through the night, which reminded one of Cremorne, but being very indifferent shots they did not profit much thereby.

"On the morning of the 21st, as soon as day broke, about 4.30 a.m., our batteries opened fire, the enemy firing well in return. I forgot to mention that Admiral Hope had written officially to our general asking him if he con-

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

sidered it necessary that the gunboats should go in at the same time, adding that to do so 'would entail a great loss of life.' This the wily sailor did, we thought, not from dislike to losing men, but simply because he wished to throw the responsibility of any loss that might be incurred upon our general, believing that Sir Hope Grant would say that he wished the gunboats to co-operate in the attack. Sir Hope's reply must have been disappointing, for he answered officially that he was quite prepared to take the forts by himself. However, the gunboats drawn up in line made their appearance off the forts at daybreak on the 21st, keeping, however, well out of range, only two English and two French gunboats opening fire on the forts.

"By 6 a.m. two large magazines in the forts we were attacking exploded, one in the large fort and the other in the small one on the north bank. Our fire was maintained steadily until nearly 8 a.m., when the guns of the fort marked *K*, which bore directly on us, were all silenced, although the defenders still kept up a heavy fire from jingalls and small wall pieces. Our infantry then advanced under a heavy fire of musketry opened upon us from the walls. I give you on the back of the plan a rough sketch showing the defences in profile at the point where our columns attacked. We attacked the fort in the rear where the Chinamen had not constructed formidable works like those they had thrown up towards the sea, where they expected to be attacked. The leading men of the storming parties had to get across the two wet ditches, half swimming and half scrambling. The French attacked at a less formidable point than we did : we attacked at the gate where there was a drawbridge, the French made for the southwest corner of the fort, where the fire was naturally less heavy than elsewhere, as they were thus opposite a salient

## THE ASSAULT

angle unprovided with any flank defence. The French got across the second ditch before our men, on whom the heavy fire was telling, so much so that when I went up with our small pontoons to help to form a bridge across the first ditch, I could scarcely get along the small narrow causeway which led to it owing to the number of our dead and wounded who lay on the road. The dead I was obliged to have thrown off the road on to the banks at its side to clear a path for the party carrying the pontoons. A round shot then went through one of these pontoons, causing some delay, and the first men over the outer ditch were some time before they could cut the rope of the drawbridge over the inner ditch ; the consequence was that our men, crowded together along the narrow causeway, were exposed to a very nasty fire.

“ By this time the French had got some few ladders under the walls, but as fast as they placed them for mounting the defenders inside knocked them down, and they kept throwing six and twelve-pounder shot, which are unpleasant missiles even when thrown with the hand if they light on the top of the head. However, determined men are not to be kept back in this fashion, and every second saw the numbers under the walls increased. Indeed, it was the safest place to be in, as no fire could reach there, and, barring the cold shot thrown over by hand, nothing could well touch you. Whilst the storming parties were thus struggling across the two wet ditches, our Armstrong guns were making admirable practice just a few feet over our heads, actually knocking the wall about so that portions of it fell upon our men’s heads. At last a French drummer struggled up a ladder and reached the top, where he waved a tricolour and gave a loud cheer. It was taken up by all outside, but before it ceased the poor plucky boy fell, shot dead. Just

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

at the same moment, the young ensign carrying the Queen's Colours of the 67th Regiment (the storming regiment), having got through the wet ditch as best he could, followed by a few men, scrambled up the woodwork near the gate and so on to the parapet, and then shook out the colour he was carrying. The few men behind him could only follow by twos and threes ; still all in rear pressed on, and if the French colours waved a few seconds first on the walls, ours was the first in the fort and on the one large raised cavalier forming part of the front face of the work (we had attacked the fort in rear). A long ramp or slope led up this cavalier, the top of which was covered with the enemy. The young ensign referred to and a few men charged up this slope in amongst the defenders, who succeeded in shooting him in two or three places. Our bayonets, however, soon cleared them out, and the work was ours, all having behaved most gallantly ; indeed, it is difficult to say whether English, French or Chinamen earned and deserved the most honour : I should be inclined to give the palm to the last named.

“The poor wretched Chinamen, as they bolted out of the fort to try and reach the river, or the other fort beyond, were shot down in numbers ; some, falling on the bamboo spikes placed round the outside of the work to strengthen it, were impaled upon them, and many were drowned in the ditches. There were about 200 dead Chinamen lying in and about the fort, and for a long distance away we could see the wounded trying to drag their broken limbs after them, and the river is still most offensive from the number of dead floating about in it. I estimate the enemy's loss in this first fort at over 1,000, for numbers of the defenders were buried by the explosion when their principal magazine blew up early in the morning, and most of their wounded had been



## RECONNAISSANCE DUTY

carried off during the fight. The Chinese general who commanded in the fort was killed, and they say themselves they have suffered severely.

“Immediately after the fall of the place, I was sent forward with a small guard to reconnoitre the ground between it and the further northern fort. Of course it was my business to go up as near as I could get to the further work ; not a pleasant mission to be engaged on, for if you go up close you are safe to be shot in such a dead level country, where there is no cover whatever, and if you do not go up close you can see or learn next to nothing. Under such circumstances I always use my own discretion, and risk nothing more than I believe to be necessary for the due performance of my task. In this instance my business was to obtain information as to the nature of the ground between the two forts, and of what the defences of the further forts consisted.

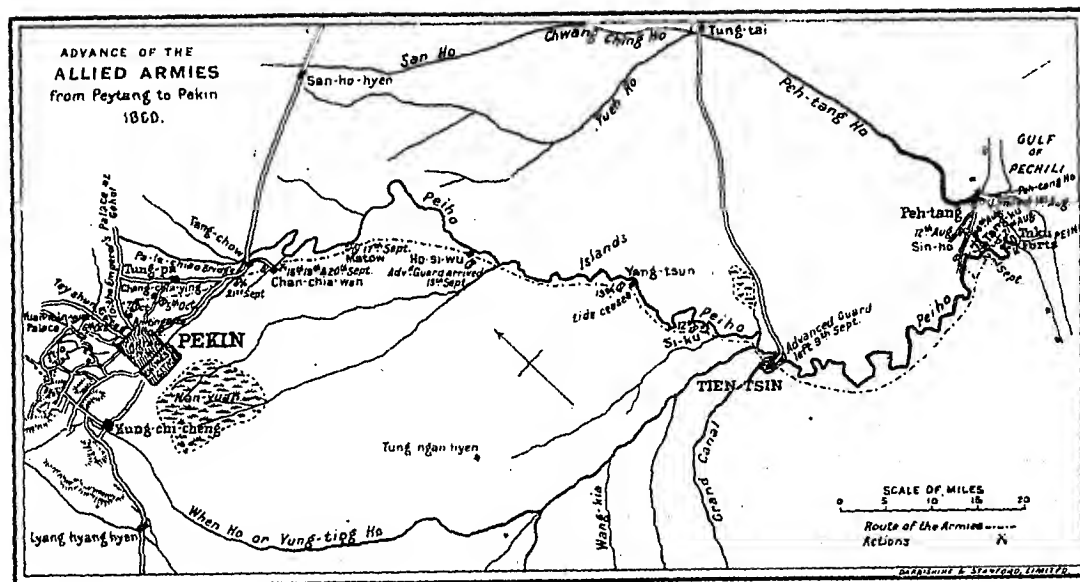
“I advanced by myself, desiring my guard to keep a couple of hundred yards behind me, scattered about in skirmishing order, so as to avoid the effects of the fire as much as possible. I had reached a point within about four or five hundred yards of the work when, to my surprise, the enemy suddenly ceased to fire upon me and my party. Upon looking round, I saw white flags hoisted on all the forts, and our guns at once ceased firing also. This was a grand opportunity for me to spy out the information I required, so I walked steadily up to the ditch of the fort and made a sketch of the defences. The place was swarming with men who kept shouting at me and evidently by their signs warning me off the premises. At last they sent out a man with a white flag, and our garrison in the fort we had taken sent an interpreter to meet them, and to ask what was wanted. The only answer we could obtain was, that the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

commandant had hoisted a white flag because the forts on the south bank had done so, but that he could not surrender the place without orders from his superior. A boat then came across the river with letters for Lord Elgin and Baron Gros, but sending no message to the general. A message was therefore sent back by us to say that unless the forts were surrendered by 11 a.m. our guns would reopen. When this message was sent to the fort immediately in our front, summoning it to surrender, the fellow who met our flag of truce was most cheeky. He said he would not give up the fort, and that if we were able we had better come and take it. Our guns were then hauled into position and our troops pushed forward to the ground marked *L*: all was being prepared for another struggle, when a message arrived from Governor-General Ho, who is the highest functionary in these parts, asking to negotiate. As 11 a.m. drew near and no fire was opened upon us, it seemed as if the garrison had vacated the fort in front of us. Our troops consequently pushed on and entered it. There were still some 2,000 of the garrison huddled together in a corner of the work, but with no military badge about them, and nothing to distinguish them from any ordinary Chinese peasant.

“That evening the south forts were vacated, and next morning our messenger returned from Mr. Ho, saying he surrendered everything. And so ends the third China War, and also this hurried letter, of which I am thoroughly ashamed, but I send it, nevertheless, as I presume you will think it is better than no letter at all. I could write for another hour if I had time, but I have not. I must try to smuggle this into the mail bag somehow or other. This letter is of course strictly private, as also the enclosed plan.

“(Signed) G. J. WOLSELEY.”



## WE MARCH UPON TIEN-TSIN

No time was lost in pushing forward our army to Tien-tsin and every one was overjoyed to leave the salt flats and hideous neighbourhood we had been in since landing. Tien-tsin had lately been surround with a great line of works that must have entailed a vast amount of labour, as they were at least fourteen miles in circumference, extending above and below the city to both banks of the river. The Grand Canal there joins the Pei-Ho.

Two imperial commissioners of high rank reached it from Peking a few days after our arrival. Peace was said by all our own "politicals" to be a certainty, and we soldiers began to speculate as to the date when we should reach home.<sup>1</sup> But it soon transpired that Lord Elgin had been taken in, for when pressed for their imperial instructions to treat with us, they had none to produce. Our ambassador resolved therefore to push on to Tung-chow, and announced he would receive no imperial messenger until he had reached that place. A battalion of the Royal Scots and one of the York and Lancaster Regiment, with some guns, reached Tien-tsin on August 25, and our cavalry brigade the day following; the first division on September 2, and the second division on the 5th of that month. By papers subsequently captured we discovered that the Emperor never intended these negotiations to lead to anything important.

<sup>1</sup> In a published letter from Tien-tsin of August 26, 1860, to his wife, Mr. Parkes wrote :

"We marched out of Peh-Tang on the 12th and we marched into Tien-Tsin on the 25th, and I do not now expect to hear another gun fired. Imperial commissioners are posting down from Peking, and with proper management on our part, diplomacy, which will now come into play, will, we should hope, be as successful as the sword."

All our diplomats throughout this war were too sanguine, and their over confidence in the near approach of peace, with a less determined general at the head of our army, might have led to our destruction.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

his object being merely to gain time. They fondly hoped to prolong negotiations into the cold weather, believing that our constitutions would not stand their winter. Our abortive negotiations afforded us soldiers much amusement. We all asked why our diplomats had not demanded that these sham commissioners should produce their written credentials immediately upon their arrival.

On September 8 our troops began to move towards Tungchow, distant from Tien-tsin by road between sixty-five and seventy miles, and nearly twenty miles from Peking. The French, about 3,000 strong, started two days later. Transport was our one serious difficulty, but we had obtained from the Chinese authorities in Tien-tsin a large number of good carts drawn by two or three mules each.

I was now given the detached duty of reconnoitring and mapping the country as we advanced. There were no natural features to be sketched, except the Pei-Ho, which twisted about in a most wriggling fashion. The country was, in fact, a dead level, covered chiefly with standing maize and millet, both of which grew to a height of about eight or nine feet. I was given as an escort a small party of Punjaubee cavalry under a native officer, Mr. Swinhoe, of our Chinese consular service as an interpreter, and Lieutenant, now General Sir R. Harrison, K.C.B., as an assistant. He was an excellent assistant, an admirable officer and a right good fellow all round. It was a pleasure to have such a gentleman with me. For the use of myself and party I was allowed so many mule carts with their Chinese drivers. I made them over to the care of my native officer, telling him that his chance of reaching the far-famed City of Peking depended upon the strictness of the watch he kept over them.

In the early morning, before we began our second march

## CHINESE DRIVERS DESERT

from Tien-tsin, I heard a considerable commotion in camp, and upon inquiring the cause was told that every Chinese driver had decamped during the violent thunderstorm and heavy downpour of the preceding night. I sent for my duffadar of cavalry and said, "Are your mules and drivers safe?" With a broad grin he answered, "Yes, sahib." Mine were, I found, the only drivers and hired mules in camp. Subsequently I asked him what measures he had taken to secure them. He said, "You told me, sahib, you would hold me responsible for the mules and drivers, so at nightfall I collected the drivers in my tent, tied all their pigtails together, and fastened the knot thus formed to my tent pole, beside which I slept." Afterwards, whenever these drivers had occasion to go about the lines, I found he sent with them a sowar with his tulwar drawn. They really behaved very well, and I know the others had bolted simply because they dared not disobey the order to do so they had received from the Tien-tsin authorities, from whom, by the bye, we had obtained the mules and drivers in question.

## CHAPTER XXX

### Chinese Perfidy—Sir Harry Parkes and others Treacherosly taken Prisoners

MANY attempts were made by the Peking Government in the hope of inducing us to fall back upon Tientsin and negotiate there. They must indeed have thought we were simple people when they made such a proposal after their many previous attempts to deceive us. They even requested us to leave our guns behind, alleging they would "disturb the minds of the inhabitants" if we took them near "the great capital."

On September 13 we reached Ho-see-Woo, which is about half-way between Tientsin and Peking. The country round ~~it~~ is undulating, prosperous, well cultivated, and pleasant to look upon. The villages we passed through were well built, and surrounded with nice gardens and orchards, which supplied us with quantities of very fine grapes and vegetables of many kinds. At first the people were extremely civil, bringing in their garden produce for sale. But upon nearing Ho-see-Woo their attitude changed. They fled at our approach, and we found that town practically deserted. Notwithstanding the help afforded us by the river as a line of communication as far as Ho-see-Woo, the transport difficulties in front were very serious. But the Imperial commissioner, the Prince

## OUR AMBASSADOR DECEIVED

of E. and his colleagues seemed so bent upon peace it was difficult to believe there was any more fighting yet in store for us. To ease our supply difficulties the second division was consequently halted at Tien-tsin.

At Ho-see-Woo other messengers from Peking reached the allied embassies, bringing despatches stating the terms upon which the Peking Government said they would make peace. Some days were lost in settling how far the two armies should advance, and where the ambassadors were to be housed pending the signing of the treaty. It was at last arranged that the allied armies should advance to the neighbourhood of Chang-kia-wan, and there halt in a position the mandarins were to point out.

On September 16 Messrs. Parkes and Loch went on to Tung-chow to prepare for Lord Elgin's reception there, Colonel Walker and a commissariat officer going with them to arrange details as to the camps and the supplies we should require. At that large city Mr. Parkes had a long interview with the Prince of E., one of the highest dignitaries in the empire. The lying promises of this great prince apparently took in Mr. Parkes, and all the embassy civilians were so cock-sure of peace that our army Headquarters accepted their announcement on the point.

According to negotiations now entered into by Lord Elgin it was arranged that the army should halt about two miles short of Chang-kia-wan, whence he was to push on to Tungchow with 1,000 men. There the terms of peace were to be finally settled, and when that was accomplished, he, with the same escort, was then to enter Peking and ratify our old treaty. For none of these diplomatic arrangements were the military authorities in any way whatever responsible.



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Upon September 17 our army and 1,000 French troops reached Matow, where most satisfactory reports were received from Mr. Parkes. Upon the strength of these assurances the army was ordered to march about fifteen miles next morning to Chang-kia-wan, which was about the same distance from Peking.

Our diplomatic comrades were so certain that peace was only a matter of hours that, as I had some sketching work to do in the neighbourhood, I told Sir Hope I should like, with his permission, to stay for a few hours behind when the army marched next morning at daybreak as usual. All round my own small camp the maize though ripe was still standing, but as the army advanced next morning the corn was found cut in all directions. This was regarded as somewhat ominous on the part of an enemy whose army consisted chiefly of cavalry, and the feeling was strengthened by our advanced guard coming suddenly upon a Tartar picket, who galloped off when they saw us.

Whilst my breakfast was being prepared in the early morning of September 18, I saw the rear guard pass by and take up a position in a little village about a couple of miles beyond. This was evidently done to let the baggage get well forward under its protection. It must have been about 7 a.m., whilst all my party were at breakfast, that a captain of the King's Dragoon Guards rode up to say he had been sent by the officer commanding the rear guard to tell me he had received orders to halt where he was for the present, as things did not look satisfactory in front. He wished me to be on my guard lest I might possibly be cut off. I sent back my best thanks to the rear guard commander for his kindness, etc., but I had

## CUT OFF FROM THE ARMY

been so thoroughly led to believe in peace by our diplomats, that I fear the tone of my voice was not in tune with my expressions of gratitude. The Dragoon galloped off and I finished my tea. Whilst I was doing so the native officer of my escort came to report the presence of a large force of the enemy's cavalry close by. He drew my attention to the column of dust they created as they moved through the very high standing maize which, in that extremely flat region, formed our horizon on all sides. I understood the position in an instant, and called out "Pull down your tent poles." The high standing corn then protected us from view, and all was got ready in haste for a start. With the exception of the Chinese drivers all my party were well mounted, for our servants rode our spare horses. I found that a very considerable body of Tartar cavalry was moving between us and the village where our rear guard was halted. The possibility of having to sacrifice our baggage and ride for our lives seemed so imminent that I filled my pockets and holster-pipes with our road surveys and sketches, determined—come what might—not to lose the result of so much care and labour. We all stood to our horses, ready to mount in a moment. But the eyes of the enemy were evidently so fixed upon our rear guard that they passed without discovering us, as we were fairly protected from their view by the tall, standing crops. We were soon packed up and *en route*, and it was not long before we and our impedimenta had joined the rear guard of the army. Leaving my carts there we pushed to the front with all speed, and I soon joined Sir Hope Grant. I found his progress barred by a large hostile army that covered a front of about five miles. Large bodies of Mongolian horsemen were to be

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

seen closing in towards our flanks, and great batteries of guns in front soon became visible. The whole position had been evidently carefully prepared as an ambuscade in which it was expected to destroy us. But Sir Hope had had too long an experience in Eastern trickery and treachery to fall into such a trap.

On that same morning Mr. Parkes in Tung-chow had discovered, from the altered tone in which the Prince of E. spoke to him, that some treachery was being planned, and that the enemy meant to fight. One is prone to say—as most of us soldiers did at the time—why did not Mr. Parkes perceive this at an earlier date? It is easy to be wise after events, but it must be admitted that under the circumstances there are few civilian diplomatists who would not have been similarly taken in. In treating with barbarian nations during a war all negotiations should be carried on by the general in command of the army. Indeed the one great lesson I learnt from this Chinese campaign was that in most wars, certainly in a war like that of 1860 in China, the general to command the army and the ambassador to make peace should be one and the same man. To separate the two functions is, according to my experience, folly gone mad. But it is usually found desirable to invent well-paid and high-sounding offices for noble lords in want of employment. The general who is not capable of making a treaty of peace such as that Lord Elgin had to make in 1860 is not fit to have supreme command in any war. I think I may say that none of the best known commanders in ancient or modern times would have been taken in as Lord Elgin was by the Chinese ministers he had to deal with throughout this campaign. Can we imagine a Caesar, a Clive, a Napoleon, a Welling-

## CHINESE TREACHERY

ton, an Outram suffering such clouds of dust to be thrown in their eyes by an enemy proverbial for lying and want of faith. Whilst feigning an earnest desire for peace all through the attendant negotiations, these Chinese diplomatists were plotting to hem us in gradually and to destroy us by overwhelming military forces? Had Sir Hope Grant been our ambassador as well as Commander-in-Chief, I am confident the Chinese ministers would not have been able to take in a man so long accustomed to deal with Easterns as he was.

When Mr. Parkes and all his party were allowed to leave Tung-chow on the morning of September 18 they made for Chang-kia-Wan in haste. They reached it without molestation, but were followed by a party of Tartar horse until half-way between that city and our troops, when they were stopped. Mr. Parkes was then taken before Sang-ko-lin-sin, dragged from his horse, made to kowtow, and his face rubbed in the dust at the feet of that Tartar savage. The sowar who was with Mr. Parkes at the time brought down his lance to the "charge" upon the first sign of violence by the Chinese soldiers, and was with difficulty restrained from fighting. "Oh, sahib," as he afterwards said when released, "if we had only charged it would have been all right."

Just before the battle opened Mr. Loch, with three sowars, galloped in from the Chinese army, bringing a letter from Mr. Parkes announcing that everything had been satisfactorily arranged with the Imperial commissioners. But Mr. Loch's own story did not corroborate that statement. He said that in company with Colonel Walker, Mr. Parkes, our commissariat officer, five men of the King's Dragoon Guards, and four sowars he had started

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

from Tung-chow about 5 a.m. that morning, leaving behind in that city Lieutenant Anderson and his seventeen sowars, Mr. de Norman, one of our attachés, and Mr. Bowlby, the *Times* correspondent. When *en route* they perceived that large bodies of Chinese troops were collecting about the very ground that had been selected for our camp near Chang-kia-wan, and that many great batteries of guns had been placed in position where the day before there had been neither troops nor guns. Mr. Parkes, the most energetic and determined of brave men, resolved at once to go back to Tung-chow to ask its officials what all this meant. This was, I think, an unfortunate, an unwise move on his part, for everything looked as if treachery was intended. He took with him only one man of the party, Private Phipps of the King's Dragoon Guards, a man as brave and as noble-spirited as himself.<sup>1</sup> Before starting for Tung-chow he arranged with Colonel Walker that he and the rest of the party should remain where they were to await his return, except Mr. Loch, who was to ride on to our army to tell the Commander-in-Chief how matters stood.

Loch had been an officer in the East India Company's Service before he had taken to diplomacy, and was as brave by nature as God makes men. Upon reaching our army, and having described the general position to Sir Hope, he volunteered to return at once to Chang-kia-wan to collect our people who were still there and bring them back. Sir Hope agreed, and said: "I will send Wolseley with you." Captain Brabazon, who was standing close by, said: "Colonel Wolseley has not yet come up, sir; may I go instead?" He went, never to return. Had

<sup>1</sup> See page 80.

## MR. LOCH

I been there at the moment, I should have been captured and beheaded as he was near the Pa-li-cheaou Bridge<sup>1</sup> very shortly afterwards, whilst being taken as a prisoner into Peking. How inscrutable are the ways of Providence !

It was a chivalrous feeling—worthy of the man—that prompted Mr. Loch to return to Tung-chow in order to hasten the departure of those he had so lately parted from there.<sup>2</sup>

Between 10 and 11 a.m.—I had then rejoined Sir Hope Grant—Colonel Walker came galloping towards us with his handful of dragoons and sowars behind him. From him we heard what follows : Whilst awaiting in the enemy's lines the return of Mr. Parkes from Tung-chow—as agreed upon between them when they parted—he had kept moving about to learn something of the enemy's position. The Chinese troops began to be uncivil, and after a time tried to get possession of his sword. Hearing a French officer call to him for help, he at once went towards him. Finding he had been severely cut about, he took the Frenchman's hand, hoping thus to help him away. But a rush was made upon them by some Chinese soldiers, who first possessed themselves of Walker's sword, and then tried to pull him from his horse. In the scuffle the poor French officer was knocked down and murdered. In another minute all must have met with the same fate had they stayed there, so calling his party to ride for their lives,

<sup>1</sup> It was only some years afterwards that I learnt of Sir Hope Grant's intention to have sent me into Tung-chow, and of Brabazon having gone instead.

<sup>2</sup> The story of these events and of the tortures Sir Harry Parkes, Mr. Loch and the other prisoners were subjected to in Peking is told in the admirable *Life of Sir H. Parkes*, by Mr. Stanley Lane-Poole, vol. i. p. 380.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Colonel Walker and those with him cut their way through the crowd. They succeeded in this, having two only of the party wounded and one horse shot, although every one near seemed to fire at them—even the Chinese batteries did so as they passed them.

The firing thus begun soon became general, and Sir Hope Grant deployed the force he had immediately with him for a general advance. Our artillery playing upon the enemy's masses inflicted heavy losses upon them, and Major Probyn, charging with the reckless daring that has always distinguished him, cleared the front to our immediate left. The action which followed was a brilliant success gained by a small body of English and French troops over an enemy that had at least 20,000 men and a vast number of guns in the field. Our pursuit extended for about two miles beyond Chang-kia-wan.

Sang-ko-lin-sin's attempt to destroy our army by treachery thus signally failed, but we had sustained a grievous—though fortunately only a temporary—loss by his capture of Mr. Parkes, the moving, the indomitable spirit in all our diplomatic dealings with this shamelessly perfidious enemy.

So certain had been our diplomatists that the war was over and peace would be immediately concluded, that before we advanced that morning we were asked to have three horses ready to convey a naval officer then in camp to Tien-tsin upon hearing from Mr. Parkes at Tung-chow that everything had been satisfactorily and finally settled. He was to sail at once for Shanghai to bring up Mr. Bruce in his ship. Although he received the letter which was to have been his sailing orders, he naturally did not start, seeing that instead of making peace the Chinese army

## NATURE OF THE COUNTRY

was about to attack us. That night a heavy gloom hung over us at Headquarters, and we all thought more of the gallant men then at the mercy of our brutal enemy than we did of our victory. We did not expect ever to see any of them again. As a punishment for Sang-ko-lin-sin's treachery the walled city of Chang-kia-wan was given over to loot. I have been at the looting of many places but have never taken part in the operation myself, for reasons already stated.

The country over which we manœuvred that day was highly cultivated, chiefly with maize, beans, and sweet potatoes, and it was thickly dotted with well-built villages surrounded by neatly kept orchards and gardens. Handsome groves of dark pine and large curiously shaped tombs were to be seen in all directions. There were numerous monuments, several of which consisted of a tall slab of marble springing from a huge marble tortoise, the Chinese emblem of longevity. The name and virtues of the individual in whose honour each had been erected were recorded thereon.

Upon September 19, the day following these unfortunate events, Mr., afterwards Sir Thomas Wade, went to Tung-chow under a flag of truce to demand the immediate release of the English and French who had been thus treacherously captured. It was a big city, and its governor declared he knew nothing about them; he was in serious dread lest we should assault the city. To have done this would have been unwise, as we were pressed for time, if our army was to be re-embarked before the country was frozen-up for the winter. We arranged, therefore, to spare it, and to make it a dépôt for stores and supplies. By a cavalry reconnaissance of the district



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

in front of us made on September 20, we found the enemy were in considerable force in the neighbourhood of the Pa-li-cheaou, or the eight li bridge.<sup>1</sup> The following morning—September 21—we moved at daybreak to attack them. The French were to make for that bridge, which is a handsome marble structure, whilst we marched for a wooden bridge a mile nearer Pekin. Both bridges spanned what was once the fine Yung-Leang Canal connecting the Pei-Ho with the capital. Our cavalry were to make a wide sweep to the westward, and by attacking the enemy's right drive him in upon our infantry.

A mile's march brought us in presence of a large Chinese army, their cavalry stretching away to their right as far as one could see. Their foot was strongly posted in the inclosures and clumps of trees with which the country there abounded. Our cavalry were soon at work. The enemy's horse, which had already suffered somewhat heavily from our guns and had retreated out of range, now moved as if to envelop our left, but our horsemen made for them with a speed they had not reckoned upon. They were mounted on small ponies, our men on great troop horses. The men of the King's Dragoon Guards were then about the biggest in our cavalry of the Line, and as they went thundering forward with loud shouts their opponents may well have thought their last hour had come. These Dragoons and Fane's Horse were in front with Probyn's regiment in second line. What an inspiring sight it was! My heart beat quicker as I watched it. Had the Chairman of the Peace Society been there I am sure he would have shouted in exultation as he saw those

<sup>1</sup> That meant eight lee or two and three-quarter miles from Tung-chow by the great paved road that runs between it and Pekin.

## A CAVALRY CHARGE

lines of gallant horsemen charge at full speed amongst the enemy's hordes. The Tartar cavalry had, however, cunningly halted behind a wide ditch to receive the charge, and delivered a volley when our horsemen reached it. At that period our irregular cavalry always rode with short, standing martingales, which prevented their horses from jumping freely. Many accordingly went head over heels into that ditch, their riders being unable to pull them up in time. Not so, however, the King's Dragoon Guards, whose horses having free heads, jumped or scrambled over safely. They were soon well in amongst the Tartars, riding over men and ponies, and knocking both down together like so many ninepins. But Probyn and Fane's sharp-sworded Sikhs, Pathans and Punjaubee Mussulmans soon followed and showed splendidly, fighting side by side with the big sturdy British Dragoon Guardsmen. In a few minutes riderless Tartar ponies were to be seen galloping in all directions, and the track of our charge was strewn with the enemy. Upon no subsequent occasion did they ever allow our cavalry to get anywhere near them. We had taught them a lesson, and I have no doubt that hundreds of them carried back into their homes in Manchuria and Mongolia marvellous tales of the big Britishers and the reckless swordsmen from the land of the five rivers, who, mounted on great horses, had charged through their ranks that day.

Our guns opened upon their retreating masses, the Armstrong shells making havoc in their ranks. We took a large number of guns during the day, and also burnt a great many Tartar camps that were well laid out, the tents in them being excellent. The country people from far and near helped at this work, and crowds were soon to be

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

seen staggering to their homes as fast as they could under the weight of the loot they had collected. Our pursuit lasted to within six miles of Peking, and when we halted both horses and men were very hungry and tired after their day's work. I had great pity for our horses, but none for myself nor for my comrades, for the day's fighting had been well worth any year of humdrum existence. If there was any poor-spirited creature amongst us, that day must have made him a better soldier, and therefore a better man.

We encamped for the night, September 21, close by where the Peking road crosses the canal by the Pa-li-cheaou Bridge. Our thirsty men and horses drank deeply of that canal water. Hundreds of very large white ducks were swimming tamely on its surface when we arrived. Very few were there next morning, but the ground near all our tents was suspiciously white with feathers.

Within the space of three days we had won two important actions, and the Chinese ministers in Peking must now have fully believed their inability to oppose us in the field. To have marched direct upon the capital on September 22 would have been a daring move, as one of our divisions had been left behind at Tien-tsin. But had they refused to open its gates, as our siege guns had not yet arrived we could not have breached its walls, and they were too high to be escaladed. It is not wise in dealing with the Chinese to threaten until you are in a position to enforce your threat should it be disregarded. Under the circumstances we then found ourselves in, it was wiser to wait for our siege train at Pa-li-cheaou than to do so immediately under the walls of Peking. The non-combatant looker-on is apt to forget the lessons which military history

## OUR DIPLOMATISTS' ASSURANCES

teaches the professional soldier on all such points. The mistake we soldiers had already made was in accepting the pleasant assurances of our diplomatist colleagues that peace was certain, and that we should have no further fighting. Had it not been for this over-confidence in peace on the part of our ambassador we should have reached the Pa-li-cheaou Bridge with all our army and our siege train also, ready for an immediate advance and for the capture of Peking.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### Surrender of Peking

THE result of our battle at the Pa-li-cheaou on September 21 had to some extent opened the eyes of the mandarins to the folly of all further resistance. Whilst encamped on this Yung-Leang canal, near the bridge, many letters passed between Prince Kung and the allied ambassadors. The prince, who was the emperor's brother, wrote to announce that he had been appointed Imperial commissioner, with full powers to treat with us *vice* the Prince of E., who had failed to arrange a peace. He made proposals for a conference, which Lord Elgin rejected, saying he would consider no terms until the prisoners they had captured against the laws of all civilized nations and under the most treacherous circumstances had been sent back to us. It was also stated that until then, we should continue military operations.

I cannot refer to this correspondence without according my admiration of Mr. Parkes' behaviour throughout it. Whilst a cruelly treated prisoner he bore himself like an English gentleman. I can say nothing higher in his favour. He positively refused to try to influence Lord Elgin in any way whatever, even when tortured and threatened with death. He never endeavoured to escape the gross indignities and misery he suffered by any effort to induce our ambassador to make the smallest diminution in our

## SIR HARRY PARKES

demands for redress, or to alter in any fashion the terms upon which we were willing to make peace. No more loyal spirit ever sustained a stout heart under more appalling and trying circumstances. His was indeed a rare instance of absolute devotion to public duty.

For Sir Hope Grant to have marched upon Peking immediately after his victory at Pa-li-cheaou, before our heavy guns and the second division had arrived, would have been a foolish and dangerous proceeding. Assured by those who were alone responsible for the diplomacy of the war that peace was practically assured, he had pushed on to Peking with a portion only of his army. He now discovered that our ambassador had been tricked and overreached by the wiles and assurances of an unscrupulous enemy. Our vexatious halt at Pa-li-cheaou was the result. To us soldiers it was very trying and painful indeed to feel that we should now probably have to fight another battle whilst a number of our comrades were in the hands of a faithless, cruel enemy. It might lead to their immediate murder. All ranks were well aware that this unpleasant prospect was the outcome of an over-sanguine diplomacy. But Sir Hope Grant was not a man to be led for a second time into so undignified a position. He knew the winter was near at hand, and that peace was consequently an urgent need, but it must be a reality, and not a mere written document.

On September 23 another letter from Prince Kung pressing for peace was received by Lord Elgin. The answer sent to it was, that if within three days from date of writing all the prisoners were returned, and the demands already made were accepted, our army would advance no further, but that unless these terms were accepted we should take

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Pekin, an event that would probably lead to the downfall of the Manchoo Dynasty. It was further intimated that those terms were final.

In another letter from the prince, Mr. Parkes had been allowed to enclose a note written in Chinese, asking for clothes for himself and Mr. Loch, and saying that both had been well treated. On the margin, traced in Persian characters, was an intimation that his letter had been written "By Order." When the clothes asked for reached the prisoners, they discovered, written by us in the same characters, the information that our guns would open upon the city in three days.

In some respects the game was in our hands, but time pressed seriously, as we could only count upon another month for military operations. We also felt the necessity of avoiding all extreme measures that might cause the overthrow of the Imperial dynasty, or even very seriously weaken the authority of the existing Government. The great, the essential aim of our policy was to make all China realize that we were immeasurably the stronger, the more powerful nation. They might style us barbarians if it pleased their vanity to do so, but we felt that for all classes to recognize fully our superior military strength would be the surest guarantee of peace in the future.

Prince Kung's answer to Lord Elgin's ultimatum was a proof that he and his councillors were in a dazed condition of mind. Unless they accepted our terms they knew that Peking must fall, and with it perhaps the whole fabric of Tartar rule also. But they feared to face the sole alternative that could avert this national collapse. The only order they had apparently received from their far-away Emperor was, "Keep the barbarians at a distance."

## THE PAVED ROAD TO PEKIN

Their most astute Ministers even had failed in their diplomacy ; we were no longer to be taken in by specious promises, and their last hope of being able to prolong negotiations until the fierce winter had set in was fading away. But even Prince Kung, although he was the Emperor's brother, shrank from asking for terms. He, as well as humbler men around him, seemed paralyzed and unable to come to any decision.

No answer to our ultimatum having reached us within the limit Lord Elgin had laid down, and our siege guns having arrived, we broke up our camp at Pa-li-cheaou on October 3, and crossing the canal by a bridge of boats prepared for the purpose, took up a position astride the paved road to Peking. This road had evidently been in former times a splendid highway. It was made of great blocks of stone some three or four feet long, and about fifteen inches wide, laid closely together. But evidently no care had been taken of it for very many years, and the heavy rains and hard frosts of winter had so disturbed these blocks that to take carts and guns over it would have destroyed their wheels. Like everything remarkable in the once well-named "Flowery Land," this road, as it then was, bespoke a past of royal greatness, of magnificent public works, and a present of degrading decay both in art and in the wisdom and zeal of all in authority.

There we were joined by our Second Division, which had made double marches to reach us. We were delayed a day waiting for a large French convoy, which did not arrive until the 4th, so our movement upon Peking was postponed until October 5. During our recent halt, letters had arrived daily from Prince Kung, sometimes two in



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

a day, entreating us not to advance. They all indicated both cunning and fright. He knew he could not stop us, but was afraid to make peace upon our terms.

Upon October 5 the allied armies advanced and bivouacked for the night in a good position north-east of Pekin. The nights were already cold, but the abundance of cut millet enabled us to keep warm. The country became much closer as we approached the capital; there were gardens all round, and numerous groves of pine—usually surrounding important tombs—blocked the view in its immediate vicinity. The roads, unmetalled everywhere, were mostly so hollowed by long use that a mounted man could see nothing of the surrounding country from them. From some high brick-kilns we made out the enormous line of old earthen ramparts which enclosed a great rectangular space to the north of Pekin nearly as large as half the Tartar city. The country people assured us that within that space Sang-ko-lin-sin and his army were encamped, and they said the Emperor was still in the Yuen-ming-Yuen Palace, about five miles west of our bivouac.

October 6 saw us again on the march, and in the evening we bivouacked inside the ramparts from which Sang-ko-lin-sin and his army had just retreated. But in the close country we had just passed through, not only the French but our own cavalry also had "lost touch" with us. The latter had been ordered to make a wide sweep to our right and take up a position on the main road running from Pekin northwards to Jeho, by which we expected the enemy to retreat. During the day Sir Hope Grant had sent to tell General Montauban that he understood Sang-ko-lin-sin had fallen back upon Yuen-ming-Yuen, and that consequently he would push forward for that place.

## YUEN-MING-YUEN PALACE

It was thought advisable, however, to wait until our cavalry had rejoined us before we did so.

I was ordered to take out a squadron of cavalry at day-break the next morning—October 7—and get into communication with our cavalry brigade and with the French. Before I started we fired a royal salute from the top of the great rampart near us, to indicate to the missing French where our army was.

By making very wide hunting “casts” I found the track of our cavalry brigade and the French army. Following it up some miles, I came upon one of our native cavalry pickets, and learnt from the officer in command of it that the French had taken possession of Yuen-ming-Yuen Palace. A quick gallop soon took me back to our headquarters.

I conducted Sir Hope Grant and Lord Elgin to the palace in the course of the day. What a sight it presented! General Montauban met Sir Hope at the door and begged him not to allow his staff to enter, and he at once assenting told us to stay outside. I was amused at this, because at that very moment there was a string of French soldiers going in empty-handed and another coming out laden with loot of all sorts and kinds. Many were dressed in the richly embroidered gowns of women, and almost all wore fine Chinese hats instead of the French képi. Sir Hope and Lord Elgin went in. Whilst I remained outside, the French “assembly” was beaten on their drums in one of the regimental camps pitched at the gate. But it was sounded in vain; very few men, not ten per company, turned out; the others were doubtless looting inside the palace. For a considerable time I walked up and down with the French general, Baron Janin. He was

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

an interesting man, and I was much amused to see how large a number of the looters presented him with a gift of something curious as they saluted him in passing out of the palace gates. Many of the looters had well-filled sacks on their backs. One of these, an Artilleryman, having made his offering to the general, turned towards me and said, as he handed to me what at first sight seemed to be a tiny framed picture, "*Mon camarade, voici un petit cadeau pour vous.*" I thanked him and put it into my pocket. It was an extremely good French enamel of a man in a flowing wig, evidently one of the many fine presents sent by Louis XIV to the Emperor of China with the imposing embassy he despatched to the Chinese court. For years it remained in its little Chinese frame standing on my writing-table. About ten years afterwards, when I had married, my wife looking at it said she believed it was by Petitot, and sent it to Paris to have it examined. She was right. It was a miniature of Boileau done by that artist in his best style. It is the only piece of loot I possess, but it is a valuable one.

I make no attempt to describe either the rich treasures of that palace or the highly decorated and, in many respects, very fine buildings which contained them. For some days afterwards the looting was continued, and a large number of our officers secured a good deal, but neither the non-commissioned officers nor the privates—being in camp several miles away—had the chance of obtaining anything. This Sir Hope Grant thought unfair, so he issued a general order directing all our officers who had obtained any loot to send it in forthwith to prize agents, whom he named, in order that it might be sold by public auction, and the sum thus obtained distributed forth-

## VALUE OF PAPER TREATIES

with amongst the army present before Peking. This was done, and the sale produced so large a sum that each private soldier received nearly £4 sterling as his share. The Commander-in-Chief and our two generals of division, Sir John Michel and Sir Robert Napier, renounced all claims for any share. This was most generous of them, especially on Sir Hope Grant's part, as his share would have been considerable.

We secured a large number of most interesting official papers in the palace, many of which threw much light upon the events of the campaign. One was Sang-ko-lin-sin's memorial addressed to the Emperor two days after we had taken the Taku forts. In it he advised His Majesty to go on a hunting tour in a fashion that evidently bred suspicion of his motives in the minds of the civil Ministers at court. They all condemned the proposal. He had made a serious mistake in not strengthening Peh-Tang and in leaving open the back-door of the Taku defences. His paper upon the general defence of the coast-line and upon the chances of our attacking him was clever. His opinion that our overthrow was certain was formed in ignorance of the immense advantage that steam gunboats and the superiority of rifled guns and muskets and of a good military system gave us over the ill-armed hordes he commanded. Amongst other papers found in the Imperial Palace was Lord Elgin's treaty of 1858. I wish I had kept it, for framed upon my walls it would have always been a warning against implicit trust in paper treaties with barbarous States until their rulers had been made to fully realize that our Sovereign could and would, if necessary, compel adherence to their stipulations by force of arms.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

A letter of October 6 from Prince Kung, signed by Mr. Parkes, reached our headquarters the day after, in which His Highness promised the return of the prisoners on October 8. In the afternoon, Mr. Wade met the commissioner Hang-Ki immediately outside the walls of Pekin, the latter having been let down over the wall in a basket. He accounted for this by saying the gates were blocked up. Kung, he said, had left the city with the army the day before, taking most of the prisoners with him, and swearing that those still in Pekin would be surrendered the next day. In accordance with this promise, Messrs. Loch, Parkes, a French gentleman, some French soldiers and some sowars, reached our Headquarters. On the 12th and 14th of that month one more French soldier and ten more of our sowars were surrendered, in all nineteen souls of the thirty-nine they had treacherously captured against the laws of all civilized nations. The gloomiest page of history does not disclose anything more horrible than the story told by one and all of those who returned. The refinement of the torture and the senseless cruelty inflicted upon them made one doubt whether the Chinese were human.

I pass by the heartrending stories told to us by the unfortunate sowars who survived the tortures inflicted upon them. They spoke in glowing terms of how Private Phipps of the King's Dragoon Guards had behaved until a lingering death ended his misery. He spoke a little Hindostanee, and could therefore make himself understood by them. They said he never lost heart, and always strove to cheer up those who bemoaned their cruel fate. To his last conscious moments he encouraged them with words of hope and comfort. All honour be to the memory

## PRIVATE PHIPPS

of this brave, stout heart, for it is only the highest order of courage, mental and bodily, that can sustain men through the tortures inflicted upon this noble British private soldier.

A paper in Chinese, stating the terms upon which alone we would spare Peking, was sent to the authorities in the city. A *sine qua non* was the surrender of the north-eastern, or in Chinese nomenclature, the An-ting Gate, for unless it was in our hands Lord Elgin's safety could not be guaranteed when he entered Peking to formally sign the proposed treaty. We gave the mandarin who was commanding in the city until noon of October 13 to comply with this demand. It was calculated that we could not have the breaching battery we were then constructing, ready to open fire before that hour.

This battery for our four heavy guns was being prepared behind the high enclosure round the "Temple of the Earth," and was about 200 yards from the city wall, and some 600 yards east of the An-ting Gate.

We warned the Peking citizens by proclamation of what we meant to do if our demands were not complied with. I went to the battery some time before the sun had reached the meridian on the day we had named for the surrender, and leaving my horse under cover I entered the battery and found everything ready for opening fire. I took my place by the right-hand gun, where the captain of artillery in command stood, like myself, watch in hand, awaiting what was to be a noon of dire import not only to the inhabitants, but also to the fortunes of the Chinese reigning family.

Up to within ten minutes of the time named, no sign of surrender was made by the enemy. Our embrasures

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

were then unmasked, the guns were deliberately sponged, loaded, run out, and then laid upon the wall where we meant to batter it. I held my breath; I was not happy, feeling we were playing at a "game of brag," for I knew too well that with the number of rounds we had with us no effective breach could be hoped for. But the enemy did not know that, when from the city walls they saw the muzzles of those dreaded guns run forward through the embrasures into which the citizens could look from their elevated position.

But a few moments before noon was reached, the An-ting Gate swung open, and Peking "surrendered at discretion." I drew a long breath of intense satisfaction at the result. We at once took possession of this entrance to the city, which was now at our mercy, and in a few minutes the Union Jack floated from the far-famed walls of the "Celestial Capital," the pride of so many millions of Chinamen who had never even seen them, and which until then had been regarded as impregnable by the whole nation. We held this An-ting Gate until peace had been signed and the allied armies had started upon their return march for Tien-tsin.

A few days afterwards, when reconnoitring to the west of the city, I met a Tartar escort with five carts, each carrying a rough coffin that contained the remains of a British prisoner who had been tortured to death by our inhuman enemy. Fastened to each coffin was a piece of paper with a Chinese representation of the name of the victim it contained. We buried the remains of our poor murdered countrymen with all military honours in the Russian cemetery outside the city.

The day after this sad ceremony, Lord Elgin made a

## OUR TERMS OF PEACE

fresh offer of peace to Prince Kung, adding to our former demands the payment within a week of £100,000 for distribution amongst the families of those whom he had allowed to be murdered.<sup>1</sup> We informed him at the same time that to mark our horror of this foul crime we intended utterly to destroy everything that remained of Yuen-ming-Yuen Palace, within whose precincts several of the British captives had been subjected to the grossest indignities. We also intimated our intention of retaining a garrison in Tien-tsin for the coming winter, and wound up by saying that it was only by the acceptance of these terms the doom hanging over the Manchoo Dynasty could be averted.

The fact that the Taiping army was said to be already within a hundred miles of Peking, may have been an extra reason why the Emperor should close with our terms lest we should make common cause with the rebels. The day following the despatch of these terms to Prince Kung, we burnt down the beautiful palace of Yuen-ming-Yuen, in which Lord Macartney, as the ambassador of England, and afterwards a French ambassador from Louis XIV had been received in great state by former emperors. A gentle wind carried to Peking dense clouds of smoke from this great conflagration, and covered its streets with a shower of burnt embers, which must have been to all classes silent evidences of our work of retribution. I am sure it was taken as an intimation of what might befall the city and all its palaces unless our terms of peace were at once accepted. To have asked for a great sum as an indemnity would have only been to impose that amount

<sup>1</sup> This amount was made over to our Commissary General on October 22.



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

of taxation upon the people, but the burning of this palace was a well-placed blow to Tartar pride and to the Emperor's absurd notions of his supremacy over all nations. Our reasons for doing this were duly announced in a proclamation written in Chinese, and posted in all the places to which we had access.

In carrying out my reconnoitring duties I was brought into daily contact with the village people at long distances from our camp near Pekin. When returning from these expeditions I passed several times through the large village close to the burnt palace of Yuen-ming-Yuen. Upon one occasion my ear caught the sound of heavy blows being struck and of groans as from a man in pain. I turned my horse into the yard whence the sound came, and there I found one man beating another on the head with an iron hammer. I saved the victim from immediate death but do not know if his assailant returned to complete the murder afterwards. From what I saw of the place I believe the villagers far and near obtained more loot from that palace than did the two allied armies.

In one of my many reconnoitring expeditions near Pekin I became separated from my party, which was a troop of Probyn's Horse. I had two of them riding behind me as orderlies, when I suddenly came across a hollow road so unusually deep that even mounted men upon it did not show over its unfenced sides. As I came to the top of the bank overlooking the road beneath, to my astonishment I saw an extremely tidy-looking and well-turned-out troop of Tartar cavalry moving along it at a walk towards Pekin. They were immediately below me, and as I thus came upon them they were evidently as much astonished as I was. Instinctively I drew my

## A TROOP OF TARTAR CAVALRY

revolver from its case, and my two Sikh orderlies cocked their carbines, and in another second would have let drive into these smart-looking Mongol horsemen. I said, "Don't fire," and lowered my own pistol. I could easily have accounted for at least three of them, and my two orderlies for another brace, but I had not the heart to fire in cold blood upon men armed only with bows and arrows and trumpery swords who had not attacked me. They rode on at a quickened pace, evidently glad to get beyond the range of the barbarian's bullet.

It was arranged that the treaty of peace was to be signed in the Hall of Audience within Peking in the afternoon of October 24. I was told to make the closest inspection of the place beforehand, for there were many sinister rumours afloat that the Chinese meant to blow up our ambassador. I did so, but could find nothing suspicious, and felt that it would be difficult to blow up Lord Elgin without killing Prince Kung also. However, one of our Divisions was carefully distributed along the route to be taken through the city, and a strong guard surrounded our ambassador.

The presence of a large force of troops marching through the streets of Peking with bands playing and colours flying must have impressed all Chinamen with the folly of their rulers in making war upon us. I feel sure it had more effect with the people than any number of paper treaties could have had. It was an open and undeniable assertion on our part, and of recognition on the part of the Emperor, of our superior strength and of our recent victories. It made every member of the Chinese official hierarchy realize that distance could not save the culprit from our vengeance.

In case of any treachery being attempted during the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

signing of the treaty in Peking, it was arranged that three guns should be fired at the An-ting Gate, where a strong reserve of troops was posted. Upon hearing that signal, our first Division was at once to march into the city.

Prince Kung was a nice-looking, yellow-faced Tartar, of middle height and good features. He was, I should say, of about eight or nine and twenty. He looked a gentleman amidst the crowd of bilious, bloated, small-pox-marked faces of the mandarins around him. It would indeed have been difficult to find anywhere a less pleasing lot of mortals than they were.

It was hoped that Mr. Bruce, who was to take up his residence at Peking as our representative when his brother, Lord Elgin, left China, would arrive before Prince Kung left Peking. The army was to be detained there until November 8, after which date we could no longer depend upon reaching the Taku forts before the Pei-Ho had been closed to navigation.

Winter had set in severely before the army left Peking and its neighbourhood on November 7 and 8. We had already had several days of heavy rain and hard frost, from which our Indian followers began to suffer. The cold north winds of winter try the Eastern constitution in that region, so all were glad to say "good-bye" to Peking and its neighbourhood. I never served with a healthier, better-cared-for or more skilfully led army in the field. The men looked well and strong as they marched south.

Our embassy was established for the winter at Tientsin, where we left a garrison of two and a half British battalions—the other half of the third battalion being quartered in the Taku forts—Fane's regiment of cavalry, a battery of field artillery, and a battalion of military

## END OF WAR WITH CHINA

train. Brigadier-General Staveley was left in command. Those troops were provided with an ample supply of warm clothing and of everything they could possibly require.

Before I left Tien-tsin all its shops were open as usual, and driving a lively trade. The confectioners soon earned a well-deserved celebrity for the excellence of their cakes, and the shopkeepers generally were extremely civil.

General Sir Hope Grant and the Headquarter Staff left that city the end of November, and having embarked at the mouth of the Pei-Ho, we steamed away for Shanghai. So ended the China War of 1860. I sincerely hope that every war we shall have forced upon us may be as ably planned and as well carried out as this was by my old and well-loved chief, Sir Hope Grant. He was the best of men and the bravest of soldiers : I can think of no higher praise that man can earn.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### A Visit to Japan, 1860-1

**W**HEN the war came to an end, twelve of the officers belonging to the Headquarter Staff, including our Commander-in-Chief, Sir Hope Grant, hired a P. and O. steamer in which we made a trip to Japan, then a very little known country. I read Lawrence Oliphant's book upon that strange land during our voyage, and thought how much he had used his privilege as a traveller to draw the long bow. His descriptions of the Japanese women and the manners and morals of the people condemned him in the eyes of all who read the book as a daring story-teller. But as we steamed away from that land of flowers and charming women and extremely able men, having seen a good deal of the country and its people, we one and all confessed how much we had wronged him. Far from exaggerating what he had seen, he had evidently curbed his powers of description from a feeling that if he had told the whole truth about Japan as he saw it, his readers would not have believed him.

I shall not dwell upon the delightful time we spent at Yedda and the Treaty Ports, nor upon the glorious outlines and colouring of the varied landscapes and coast views along the shores of the great inland sea by which we returned from Yokohama. Ours was, I believe, the first steamer

## GOVERNMENT BY AN ARISTOCRACY

ever allowed to explore the beauties of that sea, many of whose narrow channels reminded me of the Bosphorus, that exquisite bit of our old-world scenery.

I have often thought over all we saw and learned when in Japan as regarded her people and their essentially aristocratic form of government at that period. But when I review my impressions, and strive to compare Japan's then position in the world with her present power and eminence amongst the nations of the earth, I realize what being strong on land and sea means to a nation.

In the winter of 1860-61, when I visited Japan, it was not recognized as a power to be counted with in the list of nations by any Foreign Office. She was still a curiosity, a land to be visited by those in search of new interests, or of material and subjects for a book of travels. She then possessed nothing one could dignify with the name of an army, and she owned no ship for either peace or war that could sail safely beyond sight of land. Indeed, there was then a law according to which the sterns of all Japanese ships should be made of a pattern that rendered it impossible for them to undertake long voyages far from their own shores. Now we find Japan a considerable naval power and to be reckoned with as such by all other fleet-owning nations. But the most wonderful change is to be found in the form of government. Then there were two rulers, the Tycoon and the Mikado. The former was the temporal, the latter the spiritual ruler, but I never found out the exact division of power and responsibility between them. The Tycoon, then a boy, was to be seen by his people, and he admitted even foreigners to his presence ; but, except by his thirteen wives, the Mikado was seen by none. He lived in seclusion on the shore of the inland sea.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

I do not think the world's history affords a more remarkable instance of a sweeping revolution than that by which Japan entirely changed her form of government in a very short space of time. The Tycoon was dethroned and the Mikado set up in his place. This mysterious monarch, who had been previously regarded as a sort of divine personage, never allowed to walk, but carried from one room to another when necessary, and never seen, even by his Ministers, suddenly blossomed out into the very able ruler of a great empire. He discarded the graceful and becoming costume of his forefathers, and ere long I saw him described in a newspaper as dressed in the hideous clothes we daily wear at dinner, and with his empress on his arm, taking the leading part in opening a new railway !

Should China ever be wise enough to follow Japan's example in reforming her army and navy system, she is bound to become the most powerful of nations. If she wishes for any proof of what she might become under a Napoleon, let China study how Japan has converted herself into a powerful empire within the life of one generation.

Some years after the time to which I here refer, it was a question whether Colonel Charley Gordon or I should be sent to help China in dealing with the Taiping Rebellion. He was most wisely selected. As I have already mentioned, there had grown up between us many bonds of union, for I admired him with a reverence I had never felt for any other man. When he returned from China as the great Christian hero of the Taiping War, I said to him laughingly, "How differently events might have turned out had I been sent on that mission instead of you. I should have gone there with the determination of wiping out the rebellion and of becoming myself the Emperor of China !" How

## THE GERMAN NAVY IN 1860

much loftier and nobler were the objects he sought after than the part I aspired to play there? He had no earthly aspirations, for his Master was not of this world, and ambition, as that vice or virtue is commonly understood, had no resting-place in his philosophy.

As I write these lines, I reflect on the small beginnings from which some of the great armies and navies of the world have sprung. Whilst in Japan during the winter of 1860-61, I found in one of her ports the first ocean-going naval squadron Germany ever sent abroad. It consisted of a few small ships, the biggest being an old and obsolete British frigate or cruiser named the *Thetis*, which I understood we had made a present to the Prussian Kingdom of those days. That squadron was commanded by an officer whom we had trained in our navy, as had also been many others who were with him. Such was the beginning of the present great German navy that has now become one of the first in Europe. Her people are learning what an extremely costly matter it is to be strong both by sea and land. If she ever becomes a first-class naval power her people will perhaps realize how impossible it is for even the richest nations to be pre-eminent upon both land and sea.

I much enjoyed my short stay in Japan, where everything was so very different from what is to be seen there now. I found the men extremely clever and the women most fascinating. At Yokohama there was a sort of Cremorne Gardens which were extensively visited by all strangers. It was a Government institution, and printed in large English letters over the wooden arch you passed under upon entering the grounds was: "For the amusement of foreigners; no dogs or Chinamen admitted." The Japanese rulers then had an intense hatred of the Chinese



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

nation. There was a good theatre in those gardens, where pretty and extremely graceful girls danced and sang. Morality, as we understand the expression, was not then apparently esteemed an admirable virtue by any class of the Japanese people.

We all rode the nine or ten miles that separate Yokohama from Yeddo, or Tokio as it is now called. Our ponies were shod with a sort of straw pad that was fastened by strings round the fetlock. When one pad was lost or worn out you stopped at the nearest shop and bought another for the decimal part of a farthing. In bad weather when it began to rain you bought a waterproof coat made of paper for which you paid a few halfpence. When the rain ended you threw it away.

Yeddo was then an enormous city. The frequency of earthquakes rendered it out of the question to have houses more than two very low stories in height, so its population may not have been as great as an English city of half its extent would be. There was, I think, an earthquake each of the days I spent there, and more than once during my stay in Japan we had two, three and even four shocks.

Yeddo was divided into what we might call wards, each ward being separated from those about it by strong gates, at each of which was a police guard. Their arrangements in case of fire were extremely good, and as the upper story of every house was constructed of wood and paper, the fires were numerous. The lower story was built of stone, each stone made use of being mortised into those above and upon each side of it. This was done to hold it together during the worst earthquakes.

The position of Damio, or Prince, was about the same as that of a great peer in the middle ages must have been with

## YEDDO FORTY YEARS AGO

us. When such a man of consequence appeared in the streets, every one went down on his knees, and bobbed his head against the ground. The Damio's retainers wore his crest on the left breast near the shoulder, and as a rule got drunk about sundown. They were styled yaconeens, and their social position would correspond very much with that of the gentleman hanger-on or retainer in our great houses some four or five centuries ago.

One never dared to go out in Yeddo after about 4 p.m., for as a rule those retainers got drunk at that hour, and any drunken yaconeen you chanced to meet might take it into his head to cut you down. In fact, all Japan was then so unlike anything in Europe that I look back at my short stay there with the deepest interest and pleasure. All this is now ancient history, and the visitor to any great Japanese city in these days finds himself amidst a highly civilized and very clever people, and as safe as he would be in Piccadilly after dark.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### The Taiping Rebellion, 1861

**W**HILST we had been employed in bringing the Emperor of China to reason at Peking, the ancient capital of Nankin was under the rule of a usurper who styled himself the Tien-wan, or "Heavenly King." He had begun life at Canton as a groom to Mr. Roberts, an American missionary. From that good man he had picked up some knowledge of the Bible and of Christianity. He was not only an apt scholar, but a fellow of sufficient imagination to invent a religion of his own. He soon obtained a large following amongst men of his own class, and succeeded in collecting round him a fighting army of adventurers. They had nothing but life to lose, and the Chinaman does not regard its possession as highly as we do. We make a fetish of human life, and guard it round with every sort of shield and buckler that human ingenuity can devise. We invest death—the surrender of that life—with every earthly and repugnant horror that imagination can invent, and are frightened by priestly stories of the everlasting torments and misery our souls may possibly, if not probably, have subsequently to endure for ever in an unknown country, from which return is impossible. But not so with the Chinaman; death has few horrors for him. To him it is as natural to die as to be born, and unless death

## THE MISSIONARY ROBERTS

be accompanied by torture, to have his head cut off cannot be much worse than having a tooth drawn.

The very poor in China live extremely hard lives, and consequently a clever and successful adventurer, like this self-styled "Heavenly King," can easily collect around him a large following bent on a happy, easy life, even though it may possibly be a short one. Having long been anxious to visit this self-created monarch, I started by river from Shanghai for Nankin, and upon landing was provided with quarters and was fed during my stay there by order of its new sovereign. I called upon Mr. Roberts, the former master of this ruler, and found him an interesting old man, with no remarkable characteristics : he spoke English with a broad American accent. Dressed in a handsomely embroidered robe of Imperial yellow silk, and with his mandarin hat on, he looked just like a Chinaman. With that true republican spirit which burns in the breasts of many in United States society, and causes them to despise all titles conferred by monarchs, he seemed anxious I should understand that the rank his costume denoted, corresponded exactly with that of marquis in England. He was very communicative and interesting, and from him I learnt a great deal about the rebellion and its prospects of eventual success.

Soochow, that great emporium of riches and of silk manufacture, had recently been captured and destroyed by the rebels. Its loot had filled the coffers of the "Heavenly King" and his associates, and had also provided the latter with fine new clothes. That ruler, who claimed kinship with our Creator, and to be the "uterine brother" of our Saviour, professed to have frequent visions, during which he received God's orders as to what he should do.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

But his system of government was essentially Chinese, and the executioner's sword was never allowed to remain long in its scabbard. He had recently built a considerable palace, where he lived secluded from male society, surrounded by women only.

Whilst I stood opposite to it one day, the Great Gates were thrown open and a woman appeared carrying a highly-ornamented tray on which was a sort of yellow despatch-box, closely sealed, and pictured over with dragons. It contained an edict he had lately determined upon, and this was the manner in which he published it. A great crowd of courtiers had assembled for the occasion, all of whom fell at once upon their knees. Placed in a sedan chair it was carried off with great ceremony to the special "king" who attended to such matters, whilst a salvo of guns and the noise of a band attracted public attention to the event. The one really good thing about this impostor's rule was—the positive prohibition of opium smoking. To distinguish the Taipings from all other Chinamen the tail was abolished and all were compelled to wear their hair long.

During my stay in Nankin I was allowed to go where I liked, and in my excursions round the neighbourhood I usually put up many pheasants in the untilled fields. The newly-erected rebel fortifications resembled the castles I had often built as a child with playing cards and boxes of toy bricks. They were garrisoned by an undrilled, undisciplined rabble, and I soon realized that the only strength in this rebel movement lay in the weakness of the Imperial Government.

The tombs of the Ming dynasty, which had so long ruled China before the Tartar invasion are well worth a visit, though

## NANKIN 1861

the rebels had ruined much of their beauty. An imposing avenue from Nankin leads to them, upon each side of which there are stone representations of elephants and camels and tigers in various positions, resembling in many ways the streets of sphinxes by which the Pharaohs approached their ancient and gorgeous temples in Upper Egypt. The human figures there represented have neither turned-up Tartar hats nor the long-plaited tails of recent centuries, showing they were sculptured in an epoch previous to that of the present Manchoo dynasty. The far-famed porcelain tower had been blown up by the rebel barbarians, and was then but a heap of ruins.

A friend, the partner in charge of one of our great merchant-houses at Shanghai, arrived at Nankin during my interesting stay there. He was in a fine steamer bound for Hankow, the head of the Yangtse-Kiang navigation, and having asked me to join him in the trip, I did so with great pleasure. During our voyage we found that wherever the rebels had been, the towns were in ruins and the country a desert. The contrast between the rebel territory and that under the Pekin Government was remarkable. The portion of the river where the Taipings held sway was deserted; elsewhere it was a great highway of trade, numerous junks of all sizes crowding its waters.

I left Nankin early on February 28, 1861, on board a spacious steamer, and was glad to find myself once more amongst clean English people. The voyage to Hankow, and also the cities upon the Yangtse-Kiang have been so often described that I shall not dwell upon the scenery we passed through. I content myself with recording the fact that we anchored off Hankow in twelve fathoms of water on March 6, 1861. I was much surprised at the size and

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

prosperous appearance of the city, built upon both banks, but was still more astonished to find a large number of life-boats plying about in all directions. They were painted bright red so as to be easily distinguished at a distance. This was a great novelty in a land where all classes are usually so indifferent to any care for human life. When we landed immense crowds pressed to see us ; I understood then why it was that the officials who first came on board begged we should not beat the people who were sure to follow us.

A great wooden archway decorated with flags and coloured cloth had been specially erected in our honour. Every spot of vantage was occupied to which a youth could climb or a man could reach by pushing and squeezing. Little boys and old men were perched upon the house-tops to catch a sight of us the outer barbarians as we struggled with difficulty through the densely-packed people into the sedan chairs waiting for us. In these we proceeded at a brisk pace along the narrow thronged street leading to the city gate. Round it were some out-works of recent construction, the guard of which turned out as we passed, and although they freely used great whips of twisted thongs, they had much difficulty in keeping a way cleared for our imposing procession. We were received by the Viceroy with every possible mark of respect in his great yamen, or official residence. Having gone through the conventional etiquette of bowing, smiling and shaking one's own hands, he took us into a well-decorated "Hall of Reception," and motioned us to seats. There all the great mandarins of the place were assembled, but none were allowed to sit. Our interpreter, a blue-button mandarin, upon entering the hall prostrated himself at the Viceroy's

## HANKOW THE CENTRE OF CHINA

feet bumping, his forehead several times against the ground in the usual orthodox fashion of "kow-towing."

His Excellency then put to us the usual conventional questions as to our age, etc., and tea of an exquisite flavour was handed to our host and by him presented with great ceremony to us. His conversation was extremely interesting, and he discussed the official relations past and to come between England and China.

Our interview lasted nearly an hour, when he pressed us to stay and dine, but as we had both had at previous Chinese entertainments quite enough of sea-slugs, bird's-nest soup and eggs that had been buried for years, we politely refused.

Upon rising to leave, he said he wished to present us with a specimen of his poetry as a remembrance of our visit. He was as proud of his handwriting as he was also of his verses, both accomplishments being unusual with Chinese generals.

A table with writing materials was placed before him, the paper being strips of red paper spotted with gold leaf, and about seven or eight feet long and some fifteen inches wide. He wrote rapidly with a good-sized brush, a servant holding out the paper for him. This is no uncommon mode of paying visitors a compliment, and such papers may be seen hanging in most great Chinese houses, as those then given to me hang now in my humble abode.

After a few days' stay at Hankow, we left that most interesting of well-governed cities and returned to Shanghai. I started for home by the first mail steamer that left for Suez, but as I was leaving my generous and most interesting host told me as a profound secret that he had just received a cypher telegram from his steamer that had reached Woosung a few hours before, announcing that the first shot



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

had been fired in America in what subsequently developed into the greatest fratricidal struggle the world has known for many centuries ; I mean the Confederate War. For at least a full day he alone in Shanghai possessed this information, and his dealings in the Chinese markets during that short time based upon it, without doubt, paid the Dent House largely. Such was the manner in which great sums were then frequently made through fast-running steamers by Jardine and Co. at Hong Kong and by the Dent House at Shanghai. By the time I had reached Hong Kong all the world there had heard this startling news. It set my brain speculating as to how it would affect England, and consequently how it might influence my own future career.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### The Trent Affair—Ordered to Canada, 1861-2

UPON my return home from China, I had a pleasant time in Paris, knowing most of those who were then at our Embassy. It was then just the place for an idler, who, having been some years campaigning with no opportunity of spending money, wishes to get through his small savings without worry or trouble. I have often upon such occasions laughed to myself as I called to mind the old Portsmouth story I heard when quartered there years ago, of a naval captain who, having just been commissioned to a ship, in the old days of sailing vessels, was on the look-out for a good crew. Strolling down the Hard, he saw "bearing-down upon him" a sailor who had been "stroke" in his gig during his last commission. On his arm was a full rigged Portsmouth lady, dressed, evidently at the sailor's expense, in the brightest of new and gorgeous clothing, whilst walking by his side was a huge Newfoundland dog with a big watch hanging by a chain from its mouth. "Halloo, Jones," said the captain, "you are the very man I wanted to meet. I have just commissioned the *Arathusa*, and we sail next week. I still want a few good hands, and you must come as my coxswain." "Very sorry, sir," said Jones, "but 'tisn't possible; I haven't got through half my money yet." "But," replied the captain, "you have still nearly a week to spend it in, and I can't sail

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

without you." Jack scratched his head, looking perplexed and troubled. He wanted to sail with his old captain, but what was he to do with his savings? At last, his face brightened up suddenly; a brilliant idea had come to him. "Yes, sir," he said at length, "p'raps I can manage it; another Newfoundland dog, another watch, and another Poll; I think I'll do it." It was a bargain. And so it was often with us officers home from a war, and we ought to have known better.

In the autumn I visited several friends, hospitable old Tom Fortescue amongst others, at whose house I then first met my wife.

At the beginning of the winter of 1861-2, I went to hunt with a married sister in Ireland. She had bought a couple of horses in the autumn for me, and the day after my arrival I hunted one with the Duhallow Hounds, and the other next day with some harriers; they were both good fencers. The third day there was no hunting, and I rode out with my sister to buy a third horse I had seen ridden the day before, and to which I had taken a fancy. When passing the village post office, I asked for letters, and was given a bundle, which I put into my pocket. As we jogged along the road I took them out one by one, to see from whom they came. One was an official telegram, and upon opening it, I found it was an order to embark at Liverpool in three or four days, I forget which, for service in Canada as Assistant Quartermaster-General. I did not buy that third horse, but started the same evening for London. The morning papers had startled us with the serious news of what is now generally known as the "Trent Affair," and this sudden order for service in Canada made it evident that war was in the air. What had taken place was broadly as follows.

## THE TRENT AFFAIR

The captain of a frigate belonging to the United States of America had boarded one of our Royal Mail steamers, the *Trent*, and had taken from under our flag Messrs. Slidell and Mason, the envoys of the Confederate States, then on their way to Europe. Unless the captured envoys were at once returned and due apologies made, it was very evident that nothing could avert a war. One of the very shrewdest of men and most sagacious of statesmen, Mr. Abraham Lincoln, was then President, and was determined to crush what the people of the Northern States regarded as the rebellion of the Southern States. But he was wise enough to realize that he could not do so if our fleet, by keeping open the Southern ports, enabled the young Confederacy to obtain from Europe everything they required for their war. Without doubt, thousands of recruits from all parts of Europe would have poured in through the ports we should keep open. He therefore most wisely determined to disown the over-zealous act of a by no means far-seeing naval captain, and accordingly, with all due apologies for the insult offered to our flag, he delivered over to us the envoys who had been taken by force from a British merchant ship. Thus ended an episode that must have brought on a terrible war if the United States had been ruled then by an ordinary man.

I went to see my old friend Colonel Kenneth Mackenzie who was going to Canada as Quartermaster-General—my immediate chief—in this emergency. I had known him as the chief staff officer at Balaclava, and I had served under him when he was Quartermaster-General during the recent war in China. He told me we were to embark at Woolwich the following day in the steamship *Melbourne*,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

a well-known "lame duck," that he had condemned as useless during the Crimean War, and she was known to be a very bad ship at sea, to be very slow, to have unsatisfactory machinery, and, indeed, to be a worthless craft in every way. He told all this to the authorities, impressing upon them how very important it was that the officers of the Quartermaster-General's Department should sail by the fastest steamer, in order to reach Canada in time to make arrangements for the reception of the troops then under orders for Montreal and other Canadian cities. But all to no purpose. He was told that the Government insisted upon our starting on the day named, because it was deemed most desirable to announce in Parliament as soon as possible that the chief Staff Officers of the force bound for Canada had already embarked to arrange for its landing there, etc. It was evidently hoped the announcement would have some important moral effect in the United States, and make the Washington Government realize we were in earnest. *Quantula sapientia!* But as far as the army was concerned, the unfortunate and obvious result was, that the troops reached Canada before we did, for our old tub of a ship took twenty-nine days in getting to Halifax, Nova Scotia. That wretched craft did everything she ought not to have done short of going to the bottom, and was everything she should not have been.

We started from Woolwich Arsenal on December 7, 1861, and at Plymouth—three days afterwards—picked up H.M.S. *Orpheus*, a fine frigate that was to be our convoy to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. She was to keep us in sight, and guard us from all roving American cruisers during our passage across the Atlantic. The commanding officer on board the *Melbourne* was Colonel Sir J. Gordon, K.C.B., an old friend,

## A VERY BAD WINTER VOYAGE

who had been Commanding Royal Engineer of the right attack during our Siege of Sebastopol. He was, as a soldier and in private life, one of the most perfect heroes I have ever known. I do not believe God ever created a grander character. I have already mentioned him in my chapters on the Crimea.

It was bad dirty weather when we steamed out of the Thames into the Channel, bound for Plymouth, and it grew worse between that place and Cork. From that beautiful harbour we finally started about noon on December 14, and pushed out into the great Atlantic. There the sea, in the penny-a-liner's language, was "running mountains high." I do not remember having ever been on a sea that looked more angry and, to the landsman's taste, more hateful. A few of us, "old salts," had our meals as best we could, holding on with one hand as we fed ourselves with the other ; but as a rule nearly every one was very sick. We lost sight of our convoy in the afternoon of the 16th, and though we fired guns by day and burnt blue lights by night, we never saw her again during the voyage. When we last caught sight of her she was rolling heavily, and dipping her leeward yards in the sea as she did so. I presume she reached her destination, wherever it was, but as far as we were concerned, she might just as well have gone to that undefined locality commonly styled, "Davy's Locker."

The weather grew worse and worse, and our discomfort increased. The food was execrable, the cooking worse. We saw no other ships ; occasionally we lay-to, for our wretched engines could make no headway in such terrible weather. How I pitied the non-commissioned officers and men of the field battery we had on board. Their existence must have been simply terrible, for that of the colonels

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

on board the ship was bad enough, as she pitched and rolled, often straining as if she were going to pieces. Two Royal Engineer officers occupied a cabin near mine, their respective berths being one over the other. I was wakened one night by terrific screams from their cabin. I jumped from my cot, and rushing to see what was the matter, found that the ship, having made a more than usually heavy roll, the upper berth had given way—everything on board that ship seemed to give way on the least provocation—and coming down with its six feet high occupant upon the stomach of the officer sleeping below, caused him in his pain and confusion to imagine the ship was going down with all North America on top of him. I think my reader will sympathize with the poor devil below, who was, however, fortunately for himself a fat man of considerable girth. As it turned out, he was more frightened than hurt.

Upon reaching the neighbourhood of the Nova Scotian shores, we discovered that the captain had never been there before, and knew nothing about Halifax or of the entrance to its harbour, or of its adjoining rock-bound coast. The weather was still bad, and provisions for the officers mess began to run out, as did also the coal supply for our boilers. Our skipper—who asked the advice of every one who would give it—proposed to run for Sydney, in Cape Breton Island, where there are good coal mines. The only man on board who had ever been to Halifax was the portly captain of sappers, who had been recently nearly squashed under the falling berth. He was one of those dangerous men who never confess they cannot answer every question put to him, no matter what the subject may be. You might, however, in this man's case, have safely bet three to two that he was wrong in every answer he gave. Having

## SYDNEY HARBOUR

previously served in Canada he professed to know the coast we were then nearing, and gave the skipper much advice regarding it, a circumstance which considerably alarmed those on board who knew our engineer captain best.

In the course of my eventful life I can recall many extremely disagreeable nights and days. Even now the remembrance of them is still fresh in my mind ; and amongst them, very high up towards the boiling-point of my past miseries, I place the Christmas Day of 1871 that I spent on board the steamer *Melbourne*. We lay-to most of the daylight, steaming hard to try and keep her inconstant head to the wind, as she plunged and rolled, shipping tons of water as she did so. She was a craft with a poop under which was the cuddy where we fed. Cooking that day was out of the question. The waves frequently broke over the deck, and the wind was terrific. To lie in a dark cabin below, where there was no ventilation, was impossible, so I sat on a barrel in the corner of the cuddy, the three other corners being similarly occupied by shipmates. Many seas broke in through the door which opened upon the deck, and swashed freely and loudly backwards and forwards through the place. We fed that day as best we could, *sur-le-pouce*, upon sardines, or whatever we could get that required no cooking. The position, though amusing as a recollection now, then soon palled upon me. All reading and writing were impossible, for we had as much as we could do to retain our far from secure position on the barrels.

However, at last we found ourselves in the smooth waters of Sydney Harbour. As the whole country was already deep in snow, and as most of the population only spoke Gaelic, there was little to tempt us ashore. A battalion of the



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Scots Guards had recently put in there for coals, and the inhabitants in wild delight could apparently think of little else than their splendid pipers, and of a very handsome young Scotch peer, who had won all hearts because he spoke Gaelic, and had fascinated them—especially the women—by his kilt and his graceful bearing in the sword dance.

The first news we heard from shore was that the Prince Consort was dead. How all hearts on board went out to the poor widowed Queen, so dear to all her soldiers. There was silence on board for some time when this intelligence became known.

Having taken in enough coal to enable us to reach Halifax, to which place we were now bound in obedience to fresh orders just received, we again put to sea, where we again had a bad time of it. Late one evening we almost put our bowsprit into the entrance to that harbour, having nearly come abreast of the lighthouse; but as the night was so dark, and as no pilot came off to help us, our skipper thought it more prudent to turn back into the open sea, and there await daybreak. However, we were at anchor safely in the harbour before noon the following day, January 5, 1862. There we found a great ship with a battalion of the Grenadier Guards on board. She had tried to get up the St. Lawrence, and although she had one of the most experienced of captains on board, the attempt had to be abandoned, and he turned round and made for Halifax.

It was a matter of some importance that we, the Staff Officers, should get to Montreal as quickly as possible, so after many consultations with General Sir Hastings Doyle, who commanded the troops, and was also Governor in Nova Scotia, it was decided we should go round by Boston,

## BOSTON HARBOUR

Massachusetts, whence there was a good railway service to Montreal.

The "Trent Affair" had been apologized for, the Southern envoys had been sent back to us, and war had been thus happily averted. It was, however, thought desirable in Halifax that we should erase the military titles attached to the names on our baggage, and we were warned to show ourselves in public places there as little as possible.

In those days the Cunard Mail Steamers from Liverpool called at Halifax *en route* for Boston, so we all started in the first of those vessels to arrive there. On board of her were several charming New-England people, and amongst them one or two gentlemen whom I had met in China. As we steamed into Boston Harbour, one of them, who had been extremely kind to all of us during the voyage, explained to me the points of general interest in the surrounding scenery. Up to that date I had never read any good work upon the war in which General Washington had won independence from our unwise King, and from his idiotic Minister, Lord North. Sir George Trevelyan's charming and classic work on the subject has since taught most of us the story of Bunker's Hill; but in those days few Englishmen knew much about the American War of Independence beyond the fact that we had got the worst of it throughout all its phases. I had of course often heard of Bunker's Hill, and in a vague way I had always imagined it was the name of one of the many victories our old colonists had won over us in their revolutionary war. When my American friend therefore waved his hand solemnly towards the hill named after Mr. Bunker, calling my attention to it, not wishing to show my besotted ignorance of American history, I said with an enforced sigh, intended to express

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

my sorrow for our defeat upon that occasion : " Ah ! that was a dreadful disaster for us." In an instant I realized how absolutely I had " put my foot in it," for it at once brought forth the rejoinder : " I beg your pardon, sir, Bunker's Hill was a victory for the English." I have never felt more " shut up " in my life. May I venture to hope that the English boys of to-day are better instructed in American history than they were when I wore a jacket, and was not allowed pockets in my trousers lest I should always have my hands in them.

When we landed, we encountered from all we met that mixture of kindness and hospitality which are the most prominent characteristics of the American gentleman. My friend from China took me and another officer to see all the remarkable sights in what was then the very English-looking city of Boston. In the Stock Exchange we met with a sort of ovation from the very men who had so recently denounced England, " lock, stock and barrel, Bob and sinker." I was shown the relics of well won victories over us in their great War of Independence. Over these trophies was hung a shield charged with the Washington family arms, and I then heard for the first time that the " Stripes " of the United States standard had been copied from that escutcheon, both in shape and colour. Perhaps many English people may even still be as ignorant of that fact as I was then.

A long and a very dreary journey in an American railway carriage brought us to the bright and cheerful and beautifully-placed city of Montreal. Oh ! how cold that journey was ! And how glad I was to find myself at last in the stuffy rooms of a Canadian hotel.

Sir Fenwick Williams of Kars was then the general

## CANADIAN GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY

commanding in British North America, a very handsome old gentleman, with charming manners. There was a great deal of work to be got through in the hiring of suitable buildings for conversion into temporary barracks, and in the provision of furniture and stores, etc. But I was in a few days sent off to Rivière de Loup, then the most Eastern terminus of the Grand Trunk Railway. My orders were to make all the necessary arrangements for the housing for one night, and the daily despatch to Montreal of the detachments arriving there in sledges from Nova Scotia. A more tedious or a more uncomfortable railway journey I never had than that I then made from Montreal to Rivière de Loup. The carriages were dirty and very stuffy, and the only food obtainable at the station was simply garbage. Fortunately there was a French-Canadian gentleman going as far as Quebec, who had a well-stored hamper supplied for his journey by a careful wife. He kindly allowed me to share in his good things. A brace of Canadian priests and some "habitants," all muffled up in buffalo skin coats, and one or two local commercial travellers, were the only occupants of the "sleeping car," in which I travelled for over thirty-six hours.

The military staff at Rivière de Loup consisted of a medical officer—now Sir Antony Home, V.C. and K.C.B., who had been the surgeon in charge of my battalion throughout the Indian Mutiny—and a commissary general. The former, the most highly gifted and educated of interesting companions, was one of the ablest military doctors I ever knew. It was a real boon to find such a comrade in that most out-of-the-way corner of our empire. No one in the village could speak English, and I had to learn a little of the Canadian-French patois "to get along with." I had

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

plenty of time for reading ; I sketched a little, and learned to walk on snow shoes. Upon inquiry I found that the seigneur was Scotch by descent, and although he could not speak English he maintained the credit of his Scotch forebears by a decided predilection for whisky. He lived in a good house surrounded by what was in summer very possibly a pretty garden. He told me he had inherited his surname from his great-grandfather, who had been a subaltern officer or a sergeant—I forget which—in Wolf's army at the taking of Quebec, and that, like many other important Highlanders in that army, his forefather had been given a French seignury, that of Rivière de Loup being the reward for his services. Since then, by inter-marriage, the family had become French in all but name and the colour of their hair.

In early days I had read Fenimore Cooper's novels with great pleasure. They were " boys' stories " in every sense, full of adventures in the backwoods, and of fights with painted and feather-bedecked Indians. Their cruel practice of scalping all those whom they killed made the relation of their chivalrous acts and fidelity to their promises, all the more deeply interesting to a boy. Here I found myself in a primitive settlement of small wooden houses on the edge of the great, mysterious forest that was still frequented by the bear and many sorts of big game, and yet I had not seen any descendant of " Roaring Bull " or of the lovely " Minnehaha." I mentioned my surprise upon this point to the Commissariat Officer with me, who had spent many years in Canada. He said : " Oh ! there are many Micmacs about, and they are the great moose hunters in these parts. I see their chief very often, and if you would like to have a visit from him I am sure he

## A MICMAC CHIEF

would be delighted to call upon you." I said I should much like to see him.

A few days afterwards I was reading in my little room in the inn, when my honest old soldier servant came in to announce a visitor. My man was a curious old "file," who never laughed, and, without being at all grave in disposition, seemed to have no appreciation of a joke nor of the amusing side of life. But when anything occurred out of the usual current of his daily occupations that would have interested or amused most men, his sentences partook of grunts more than of ordinary expressions of opinion, or than any common description of the event he wished to report. "There is a man downstairs, sir, who says the Commissary Officer has sent him to see you." "Oh, that must be the old Indian chief; bring him up." In a few minutes my solemn servitor ushered in an extremely dirty looking fellow, who announced himself by a high-sounding Indian title. As soon as the door was shut, a horrible smell of whisky pervaded my little room. My Indian friend was in no sense drunk, but—as I was subsequently informed—whenever he visited the little village of Rivière de Loup—once possibly the capital of his forebear's dominions—he spent whatever money he possessed in the strong burning intoxicating waters which the local publican—my landlord—in defiance of the law on that point, sold him liberally.

I expected, in my then ignorance of the country, to have seen a fine, dignified-looking chief, dressed in furs and feathers, and endowed with the solemnity of manners that pertained to the Indians described in *Masterman Ready*, that most thrilling of boy's books. But I saw before me merely a watery-eyed old rascal, without any glimmer of distinction that could tell you he sprang from a long line

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

of at least manly ancestors. He began by expressions of devoted loyalty to "the Great Mother," our Queen, about whom all the Indians I ever came to know in North America were always most deeply interested, and of whom they spoke as other men would speak of a heavenly deity. He showed me a very fine silver medal that he wore fastened to a string round his neck, and which he said with pride had been given to his great-grandfather by King George III. It was quite four inches in diameter, and had a fine representation of His Majesty on one side, and an engraved inscription on the other. I should have liked to buy it, but I never met with or heard of any Indian chief who would part upon any terms with such medals. They are not only their "title-deeds" to their chieftainship, and to the territorial possessions they claim—and with justice claim—but they are regarded with the sort of superstitious reverence that the pilgrim from some holy place attaches to the sacred relic obtained there.

I had some interesting talk with this most voluble of North American chiefs. He spoke of the former greatness of his tribe, contrasting it with his own poverty. When the time came for me to bid him good-bye, as I shook hands with him I gave him a half-crown piece that I happened to have in my pocket at the moment, although I felt sure he would forthwith spend it on drink. He looked at it a moment, and as he turned his eyes once more upon me, he said: "Won't you make it a dollar?" I felt truly sorry for him in my heart, especially as I knew that his degradation was the result of the white man's rule, and before the booted European had ever been seen in the forests of Canada, their Indian inhabitants led a healthy life of savagery undegraded by the craving which we had

## MONTREAL

imbued them with for strong drink—that accursed poison which Europeans introduce into all lands they invade.

Except that every day about a hundred British soldiers spent the night in the village, their officers being accommodated in the little inn where I lodged, I lived very much as I should do in a foreign country. The life was monotonous, and I began to realize that a country covered with several feet of snow for about half the year did not afford the most beautiful of landscapes. I was not sorry when I saw my last detachment through the station, and was able to follow in its wake to Montreal. There I soon settled down, and spent several happy years amongst very pleasant people. I made many trips to the United States, and made friends, with some of whom I have ever since been intimate. I lived at Montreal, then our military headquarters in North America, and had the advantage of serving there for some time under Colonel Jock Mackenzie, who was my immediate master. From him I learnt a great deal professionally. He was a first rate staff officer, a most genial companion, a gentleman in all the highest acceptation of that term, and a firm and most lovable friend.

Life in Montreal was very pleasant. Of course I bought horses and a sledge, in which I daily drove very charming women, both Canadian and American. Some extremely nice Southerner families had taken refuge in Montreal, and added much to its social amusements. There was a skating rink where every one performed daily on the ice, a regimental band adding much zest to the exercise. The garrison consisted of two battalions of Foot Guards, one of the Line and a battery of Field Artillery. The general commanding the troops in the province of Quebec—to which Montreal belongs—was Sir James Lindsay, an able energetic soldier,



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

whose heart was in his work, and one of the most charming men I ever knew. He was the life and soul of the place, and as great a favourite with the Canadians as he was with the troops under his command. We had very successful garrison theatricals in the winter, and many were the sledge expeditions we made into the neighbouring country. Altogether, it was an elysium of bliss for young officers, the only trouble being to keep single. Several impressionable young captains and subalterns had to be sent home hurriedly to save them from imprudent marriages. Although these Canadian ladies were very charming they were not richly endowed with worldly goods.

It was at this time that I made the acquaintance of Lord Mount-Stephen, now one of my oldest and best of friends, and to whom I dedicate these volumes. It is to his pluck and enterprise we are chiefly indebted for the great railway which, running over the Rocky Mountains, unites the British provinces on the Pacific with those in the valley of the St. Lawrence and on the seaboard of the Atlantic.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### Visit to the Confederate Army, 1862

**B**EFORE the Great Republic of the West had completed a century of independent national existence, a terrible internecine war threatened its destruction. The events at the time monopolized the attention of all the soldiers and statesmen in the civilized world. It was an attempt upon the part of the Southern States to sever their political connexion with the United States, and to set up for themselves as an independent Commonwealth. That war was full of incidents which do honour to both belligerents, now again one nation. But its history also contains many lessons for all non-military nations, ourselves for example, whose Army affairs are ruled in an absolute fashion by a political civilian as War Minister.

The result of the battle of "Bull Run," in July, 1861, had taught Mr. Lincoln's Government the absurdity of having trusted to a purely civilian army to put down this attempt on the part of the Southern States. That novel experiment "had proved a terrible failure. The nation that had lately been so confident of capturing Richmond, was now anxious for the security of Washington." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the period when the battle of Antietam was fought. See p. 210, vol. i., of the late Colonel Henderson's delightful and instructive work on *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil*

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The shrewd, the wise Mr. Lincoln seems to have quickly taken in the position. Hitherto he had listened too much to his Ministers, but now he turned for advice to professional soldiers, as he would have done to the best available surgeon had he broken his leg. Thenceforth every effort was made, with the best military assistance available, to create a fighting army upon military lines, the component parts of which should be capable of acting together in a well planned, well understood scheme of campaign.

But Mr. Davis, on the other hand, though honest and hardworking and with far abler military advisers round him, lacked the solid wisdom to follow Mr. Lincoln's example, being puffed up with a belief in his own superior wisdom. He seemed to think that because he was clever, could speak upon most topics very glibly, and was undoubtedly a sharp, able politician, he must therefore be also fully competent to rule an army and to devise military campaigns. In the manipulation of party questions he knew himself to be far superior to Generals Lee, Stonewall Jackson, Johnson, and the other eminent strategists at his command: may he not in all good faith, though in equally wide folly, have argued to himself that he must therefore be also a better judge upon all important military questions? I can account for his conduct in no other way, any more than I can explain to my own inward satisfaction how it is that Mr. John Bull, so wise in commerce and in the everyday government of his great public business, should always prefer to place the healthy well-being

*War.* I wish all our officers would read it. They would find its well told story as intensely interesting as its teaching is sound and full of useful advice for all Englishmen of to-day. Colonel Henderson's death was not only a serious loss to the army, but to the nation also.

## MR. PRESIDENT DAVIS

and efficiency of his army in the hands of a quack, rather than confide them to a skilled professional soldier.

Mr. Davis' views upon strategy were opposed to all the teaching of military history. He insisted upon trying to hold too much territory, and by doing so was forced into a wide dispersal of his few and small available armies. He expended his strength upon distant projects where success even could have had little influence upon the great struggle he had embarked upon. His military advisers urged upon him the immediate necessity for the concentration of all his military strength. But, on the other hand, his political colleagues, to whom the immutable laws of strategy were unsolved riddles, pressed him to attack the Federal States upon what would appear to have been all the sixteen northern points of the compass; and he agreed with them.

Surely, if ever there was a cause lost through ignorance of the soldier's science on the part of those into whose hands a trusting people had confided it, the cause of Confederate Independence was lost in 1862 by the military folly of Mr. Davis and of the civilian colleagues who surrounded him.

Throughout the summer of 1862 I had followed every move of the two belligerent American armies as closely as I could on the only maps obtainable of the Southern States. The attempts made by General MacClellan and other Northern leaders to reach Richmond were seriously studied as military problems by most of our officers serving in Canada, several of whom had visited the Northern armies, and had met with great kindness from all concerned. But we could obtain no trustworthy information regarding the Southern plans, or operations, or mode of fighting. The

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idea therefore struck me that, although it would be difficult to get through the Northern States to Richmond as a travelling gentleman, the attempt would be well worth making. I knew from personal experience how much all loafers are hated at the Headquarters of every army in the field. But I felt a sort of justification in presuming to inflict myself upon the staff of the Confederate army, should I succeed in joining it, because I had myself so often been similarly bored by the presence of travelling gentlemen at the Headquarters of armies with which I happened to be serving in the field.

I obtained two months' leave from the general officer commanding in Canada, who had, however, no notion of what my plans were.

Lord Edward St. Maur, who had recently been travelling in the United States, had stayed a few days with me in Canada before he left for England. We had talked much of the events of the war between the Northern and Southern States, and of the recent operations of their respective armies. Influenced by what he told me of Southern affairs, I made up my mind that I would try, by hook or by crook, to reach the army of Virginia then commanded by that greatest of all modern leaders, General Lee. Lord Edward St. Maur gave me a letter to a friend of his in Baltimore, who, he said, was in a position to advise me as to how I could most easily accomplish that object. He was a rich Southerner of the very best sort, and no praise could be higher.

When I was passing through New York on my way South, the world was startled by the news that General Lee had assumed the offensive, had crossed the Potomac at Harper's Ferry, and was marching upon Washington.

## GENERAL LEE CROSSES THE POTOMAC

This news spread dismay in Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet. They had tried all sorts of generals, and one after another, all had failed to reach Richmond or defeat General Lee, still more to bring the South into subjection. In other words, those generals had been soundly beaten. General MacClellan, by far the best of them—cried up at first as a "second Napoleon"—had not fulfilled the expectations of his countrymen. He was said to be a cunctator, and was dismissed. Then came a series of very inferior generals, who talked big and did nothing. One had announced, upon assuming command, that "thenceforth his headquarters would be in the saddle." But before many weeks I saw that saddle and all his smart uniform exhibited in the shop windows of a Richmond tailor, the result of his defeat.

Mr. Lincoln and his advisers were at their wits' end. Here was the redoubtable Lee actually across the Potomac with an army marching upon Washington. What was to be done? With his usual clear-sightedness, Mr. Lincoln at once determined to recall General MacClellan, whom he had so lately dismissed. He realized that, with all his shortcomings, he was the only leader known then in the Union States who could restore public confidence. He alone had sufficient reputation with the Northern soldiers to bring them again together as an army. It required to be a really sound and thoroughly good army that would have any chance against the army of Lee, a general of whom all the old officers of the United States army most justly had the highest opinion.

I do not wish to overload my story with descriptions of wars in which I took no part. I shall only, therefore, refer in a general way to the position of the two hostile

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armies then facing one another in the valley of the Potomac.

The Southern cause in Virginia throughout the spring and summer of 1862 had been very successful. General MacClellan with his splendidly equipped army had been driven from "the peninsula," and the boastful General Pope had been made short work of on the Rappahannock. Both had utterly failed in their attempt to reach Richmond, and their defeated and demoralized troops had taken refuge near Washington. They were unable to cope with General Lee's army, though it was far inferior in strength. In fact, the Confederates had won all along the line, thanks to the ably conceived and well calculated strategy of that great Virginian leader, to the brilliant tactics of Stonewall Jackson and other capable soldiers; and to the superior fighting qualities of their splendid and patriotic rank and file. That campaign was a masterpiece both in conception and in execution, and did high honour to the soldierlike spirit and patriotism of the ill-shod, overworked, and badly clothed regimental officers and men of the Southern army. According to my notion of military history, there is as much instruction, both in strategy and tactics, to be gleaned from General Lee's but little studied operations of 1862 as there is to be found in Napoleon's campaign of 1796, which we all read so attentively and recommend others to master thoroughly, and to inwardly digest.

Throughout the early part of 1862 General Lee's strategy had been of the defensive order, whilst his tactics were decidedly offensive in character. Though badly found in all the weapons, ammunition, military equipment, etc., required for soldiers in the field, his army had nevertheless achieved great things. He already felt that his men had

## GENERAL LEE'S PLAN OF CAMPAIGN.

learnt self confidence by victory and the pride it inspires, and he as naturally assumed that the defeats suffered by the Northern troops must have had the reverse effect upon their morale as soldiers. This led him to believe that the time had come when he should assume a vigorous strategical offensive. His plan was therefore to strike boldly at Washington, the Federal capital. Its capture would naturally have a great moral effect, not only all over the American continent, but also in Europe.

Up to the autumn of 1862 it may be said, that the military policy of the Confederacy had been merely of an offensive-defensive character. War with all its horrors had not yet been brought home to the Northern people by any invasion of their territory. Why not invade Maryland and take Washington, the Federal seat of Government? The renown of such an achievement would go farther towards winning independence for the Confederacy than any number of great victories won in defence of Richmond. This was General Lee's opinion, and Mr. Davis accepted it. Stonewall Jackson had long urged this policy of invasion upon the Government in Richmond, but the civilians who ruled there did not understand war's grim science well enough to adopt it at once. However, on September 6, 1862, Lee's army, nearly 60,000 strong, of whom about 4,000 were mounted troops, crossed the Potomac into Maryland at Harper's Ferry. But the men were so badly shod—indeed, a considerable proportion had no boots or shoes—that at the battle of Antietam which followed, as General Lee subsequently assured me, he never had more than about 35,000 men with him. The remainder of his army, shoeless and footsore, were straggling along the roads in rear, trying in vain to reach him in time for the battle.



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His worst enemy would not accuse Lee of untruth in any shape, so, my reader, you can safely take that estimate to be the number of soldiers with which he attacked and nearly defeated General MacClellan's great army at Antietam.

The Southern armies were in great and sore need of boots, blankets, and clothing of all sorts. It was felt that the capture of Washington would supply them with all they stood most in need of.

It was then a common idea in many quarters that the French Emperor was anxious to recognize the independence of the Confederate States, and was only prevented from adopting that course by England's refusal to join him in it. How far that may have been true I know not.

I was travelling in company with a dear friend, Sir William Muir, the principal medical officer in Canada, whom I had long known well. We had reached Philadelphia, and there we decided to separate, as he was most anxious to study the medical arrangements of the Northern forces, and I longed to get into Dixey's land to see General Lee's redoubtable army. I consequently made for Baltimore, believing that General Lee would carry everything before him in Maryland, as he had already done in Virginia. There I should be in a good position to join him in Washington, which I thought he would reach in the course of a few days. Immediately upon arrival in Baltimore, I presented that one letter of introduction to which I have already referred, and was received with the utmost cordiality by the gentleman to whom it was addressed.

Baltimore was occupied by a strong Northern force under a general with a German name. He was hated by the inhabitants, who were decidedly Southern in their sympathies. I was told that he returned this feeling by being

## BALTIMORE

positively cruel to all classes of the community. I then realized how intense was the feeling between the two camps into which the United States were then divided. Almost all the young Baltimore gentlemen had joined General Lee's army, so, except the officers of the Northern garrison, very few men of the better classes were to be seen in the streets. Extreme courtesy to women is a strong trait in the American character. But, on the other hand, so pronounced was the intense loathing entertained by the ladies of Baltimore for all whom they regarded as their oppressors, that they would hold no converse with them. I have seen a lady in the streets when she encountered what she would have contemptuously styled a "Yankee officer," get close up against the wall on the inner side of the footpath, and draw in the skirts of her dress to mark her horror of allowing them to be defiled by touching him as he passed. He could do nothing, and when I referred to this practice in conversation, I could see how much it amused the lady actors in this little drama. They well knew how keenly it went to the hearts of men who pride themselves upon their chivalrous respect for the weaker sex. Hence the enjoyment it afforded them.

I told my newly acquired friend how anxious I was to reach General Lee's headquarters, and he at once said he would gladly arrange for my passage into Virginia by what was then known amongst Southerners as the "Underground Route." Official messengers went daily backwards and forwards between the authorities in Richmond and their friends in Maryland, and there was naturally a considerable amount of smuggling going on across the Lower Potomac in quinine, tea, coffee, sugar, and other little things which the South did not produce. Great prices were paid for all

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those articles, and although the smugglers were often caught, others were easily found to take their place in so lucrative a trade.

Upon my return to Canada, I dealt at some length upon all I saw and heard during my visit to the Confederacy in an article published in the January number of *Blackwood* for 1863. I had never before written anything for any periodical, and sent it home in no confident spirit that it would even be inserted. I did not know Mr. John Blackwood then, but I had long been a constant reader of his far-famed Magazine. To my intense delight, it was not only given the foremost place in the January number, of 1863, but I received a charming note from him, in which to my astonishment he enclosed a cheque for forty pounds, or guineas.

I was very much struck with the difference in bearing of the Baltimore gentlefolk towards me, a stranger—except as far as my one letter of introduction went—and the manner in which I was treated whenever I approached any of the United States authorities at this time. The fact of being an officer in the Queen's service was a sufficient introduction to any Southern gentleman, whilst it made little impression upon the Northerner.

The first day of my stay in Baltimore, when lunching with my newly made friend at his club, he asked me what I intended doing that evening. Upon saying I had no engagements, he said, "Would you like to go to a ball?" "Very much," was my answer. "Then if you will come to our house at"—I forget the hour—"you can go to a ball with us," or words to that effect. Accordingly at the hour named I found myself seated in his drawing-room, where the only other occupant was a nice old lady. She made herself extremely pleasant, and in a short time the

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door opened and there entered a very pretty girl, of about eighteen, I should say. I was introduced to her, and she asked me with a very attractive smile, "Are you ready?" I stammered out, "Yes." She kissed the old lady, who was her grandmother, and of whom I took my formal leave. We two, the young girl and myself, drove off in a brougham some miles into the country. It was a capital ball; I danced and spent most of the evening with my charming companion, and was most hospitably entertained by the delightful owner of the house. Nothing could be kinder than the reception I had from all those I met at the ball, and yet not one in the room had ever heard of me before; but I was an English gentleman—that was enough for the kind, hospitable, and well born people of Maryland. After supper, and very late on into the night, or I should say early the following morning, my most attractive partner and I drove back to Baltimore, where she dropped me at my inn. I had had a delightful evening, though I felt somewhat shy at what was to me the unusual position in which I found myself. But to this well born young lady and her family the proceeding did not seem in any way odd or unusual.

I may as well say here that there is, or at least was, when I had the privilege of knowing many ladies from the Southern States, an unspeakable charm and fascination about them that is rarely to be met with in the women of any other country. I have described that evening's entertainment because its events were unlike those of our own dull and formal procedure in England. And yet I am as certain as I can be of anything in the world that in every respect the ladies of the South were as strictly modest and circumspect as those of my own country. They were, however, more

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trusted by their parents, and I believe that such trust was never misplaced.

In a few days my kind friend had made every arrangement for my "underground passage," and also for that of the Honble. Frank Lawley, the recently arrived *Times* Correspondent. He too had been sent to my Baltimore friend to get him safely across the Potomac into Virginia. He had been Mr. Gladstone's private secretary, and was well known in London society. A fine, handsome man, and just eight years my senior, he had seen much of political and social life, and had sounded all its depths and shoals. I never knew anyone with a more charming voice or a more seductive manner. Wherever he went in America he was recognized as being very like the best pictures of the great General Washington, a fact in itself that recommended him strongly to all classes both north and south of the Potomac River. Highly cultivated, he wrote well and like an educated gentleman. He was a delightful companion, and during the time I spent in his company I never had a dull quarter of an hour.

We started eventually from Baltimore in a two-horse buggy hired for the trip. The driver was a "rebel," who knew the country well and every gentleman's house where he could conceal us when necessary. My Baltimore friend assured us we could rely upon his devotion and loyalty. The country we passed through was mostly well cultivated, but here and there the loss of slaves since the war began showed already its effects upon many farms. In several localities the tobacco was running to seed from want of field hands to care for that valuable crop. We met many farmers, but all looked cowed from the treatment

## LORD BALTIMORE'S HOUSE

received from the United States mounted troops then ceaselessly patrolling their country.

Amongst the gentlemen's houses we stayed at was that built by the first Lord Baltimore, and then still occupied by the Calverts, who claimed to be his descendants. They entertained us most hospitably, although they said that many of their slaves had been taken away by what they called "Yankee patrols." Over the chimneypiece in their dining-room was a picture of Lord Baltimore, said to be by Vandyke, and the whole house had an English charm about it. Built of red brick about two centuries before, it resembled many of the small old manor houses so often to be seen at home. Every brick had on it a Staffordshire mark. This astonished me, until my host explained that, when it was built, many ships trading between England and her settlements on the Potomac used to make the outward voyage with bricks as ballast.

After several disagreeable interviews with patrols of the recently raised United States cavalry, we at last reached a secluded spot on the river bank. There we spent the night in the loft of an old tumbledown shed belonging to a small farmer who had recently taken to the more lucrative, but more risky, occupation of smuggling.

Our accommodation was not first rate. I had a dirty sack for a pillow, but was soon sound asleep. Roused, however, by some noise about midnight, I saw Frank Lawley with the end of a lighted candle in one hand and a stick in the other chasing the rats which swarmed there, and which had been, he said, running over him very freely. I laughed and recommended him to take an old campaigner's advice and go to sleep, rats or no rats.

Before I could get to sleep again I found the rats had

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taken to running freely over me also. When the morning sun subsequently enabled me to see clearly around, I took in why it was the rats had paid us so much attention during the night. The sack that had been my pillow was filled with salt pork, the daily food of the slaves, who from long custom prefer it to all fresh meat.

This was my travelling companion's début in campaigning life, and the rats were then a little too much for him. In a year's time from that date I have no doubt he had learnt to sleep well, even when rats ran freely about him as they had done the night we spent together in that horrid loft by the Potomac River. The night had been one of bad smells, of rats and of dirt, but so far we had been fortunate in escaping capture by the Northern patrols. That was our chief care.

When day broke the view was delightful. The sun was rising over the river where it formed our eastern horizon. There was a stillness, a silence everywhere. There was not even a ripple upon the smooth river surface on which the masts and yards and hanging sails of becalmed neighbouring ships were reflected as we see them in pictures by Vanderveldt.

The scene was beautiful, but the smuggler appreciated only the rising mist and the gentle wind that promised him both concealment and a smooth crossing. Now and then, however, his countenance fell as he saw, or thought he had discovered, some hostile gunboat approaching through the haze. He hugged the northern bank and kept amongst the reeds as much as possible, to avoid the searching range of the naval telescope, of which instrument he told us marvellous stories and was much in dread.

We dropped slowly up the river with the flowing tide,

## RUNNING THE BLOCKADE

and when it turned the boat was anchored close to shore, whilst its living freight took refuge in a neighbouring shed surrounded with bushes and tall reeds. At sunset we were off again, when, after some hours of fluctuating feelings ranging from what seemed to be the horrible certainty of detection to the delightful hope and expectation that we had escaped unseen, we at last reached the creek on the Virginia shore to which our dealer in contraband goods was bound. His face had been throughout an interesting study to me. Extreme nervous anxiety was depicted upon it from start to finish, which at times settled down into dark despair when once or twice detection seemed inevitable. And it was but natural, for he had a wife and family whose means of living were most probably dependent upon the success of this venture. It was a valuable one to him, for he had a full boatload of tea, coffee, and sugar on board, and we had to pay him very handsomely for the extra risks he ran upon our account. Upon landing, we at once fell into the hands of a Confederate cavalry patrol, whose commanding officer was a charming young Southern gentleman. He said with many well spoken apologies that he must take us as prisoners to Fredericksburg, which was his headquarters. He treated us as his equals and with every kindness in his power. From Fredericksburg we went on to Richmond by rail. The road was extremely rough and jolting, and many in the crowd of badly wounded men in the train had recently had their legs amputated. That train opened Frank Lawley's eyes to the horrible side of war, made all the more horrible in this instance because no chloroform or medical appliances of any sort were available.

We had some difficulty in obtaining the humblest accom-



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modation in the overcrowded but beautiful city of Richmond. The place was densely packed with human beings of all classes. I called upon the Secretary of State for War, a man with charming manners, who was kindness itself to us. Piled round his room in great bundles were the handsome United States colours and standards taken during the recent fighting in the neighbourhood. I told him I should like to visit the surrounding country, lately the scene of such hard fighting, and expressed a wish to visit the batteries at Drury's Bluff on the Potomac. At the last-named position the officer in command was Captain Lee, late of the United States navy, a brother of the Southern Commander-in-Chief. With the utmost grace of manner he at once acceded to my requests.

Hundreds of fresh graves marked the corners where the fire had been hottest on the battlefields I visited in the neighbourhood of Cold Harbour and Mechanicsville. I was accompanied by an educated officer, kindly sent with me to explain minutely every phase of those battles. Each and all of them were remarkable for many reasons, amongst others from the fact that the great masses engaged on both sides consisted almost entirely of undisciplined, untrained, and even of most imperfectly drilled troops. From the beginning of the war I had closely followed its events, but I had not realized how difficult was the country through which MacClellan had fought in the hope of reaching Richmond until I had driven and walked over much of it. However, I shall not enter into details regarding a campaign since then so well described by many able pens.

To wander over fields where lately two English-speaking armies had met in deadly strife was a sad but an instructive opportunity for a British colonel. The military débris of

## BATTLEFIELDS NEAR RICHMOND

MacClellan's army covered acres of ground, and many thousands of Lee's soldiers, I was assured, had found there the arms, equipment, and clothing which they needed so much. Throughout this part of the long struggle it may be truthfully asserted that the Union Government clothed and armed and supplied with artillery not only its own forces but practically the Southern armies also.

Much if not most of the fighting near Richmond had been in woods, and it was curious to note where field batteries had cut long alleys through them, and where shells had exploded in the trunks of forest giants. In many places, the woods were riddled with bullets.

The explanation of the movements of the two armies by the young officer who acted as my guide was clear and interesting. He pointed out where Lee had attacked in front whilst Stonewall Jackson had done so in flank, and where MacClellan had only escaped utter destruction through the non-execution of Lee's orders. But the staff officers on both sides were at first of little use. They did their best, but they knew next to nothing of their business, nor indeed of either strategy or tactics.

Having seen everything of military interest at Richmond that my time would admit of, I was anxious to get to General Lee's army as soon as possible, for the end of my period of leave from Canada drew near. The Minister of War was most kind, and helped me in every way. When he signed my passport to enable me to visit the army, he gave me a private note to General Lee, in which he wrote to this effect: "I have not asked Colonel Wolseley to take the usual oath that he would disclose nothing of what he sees here to our enemies, because I know I can rely upon the honour of an English officer." I was sensibly touched by

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this expression of confidence in the honour of the British gentleman, and it made me weigh all the more carefully what I wrote and said regarding my experiences in "Dixeyland" when I once more found myself under the Union Jack.

I left Richmond by a very early train, and in the evening found myself at Staunton, then the railway terminus in the already much fought-over Shenandoah Valley, celebrated for its beautiful scenery, fertility, and numerous historical associations. I spent a rather trying night at the Staunton inn, crowded as it was with hungry soldiers of all grades. Thence I had to find my way as best I could for ninety miles to General Lee's Headquarters at Winchester. He had established his army there after his recent unsuccessful attack upon MacClellan's position at Antietam. The journey was a dreary proceeding of several days, and made in a returning empty ambulance waggon of a rickety nature. That four-wheeled conveyance required repairs and continued nursing to keep it in working order. Fortunately, however, the road was a fairly good one, being, as I was told, the only macadamized highway in the State. We passed numerous large parties of convalescents on their way back to the army, nearly all of whom looked more suited for the hospital than for a cold bivouac. The nights at the time were bitterly cold, and the men's clothing most insufficient. What misery, what hardships those poor Southern soldiers underwent, whilst their highly paid, well clothed and well fed enemies, who had been collected, not only from the Northern States but from all parts of Europe, were luxuriously provided for.

I shall not describe that journey, made necessarily under very uncomfortable circumstances. But I reached my

## GENERAL LEE'S HEADQUARTERS

destination, Winchester, in the morning of my fourth day's march. In that overcrowded little town I made the best arrangement I could for bed and board during the time I was to be in the neighbourhood.

As soon as I could do so I proceeded to General Lee's Headquarters, about six miles out of the town, on the road to Harper's Ferry. Every incident in that visit to him is indelibly stamped on my memory. I have taken no special trouble to remember all he said to me then and during subsequent conversations, and yet it is still fresh in my recollection. But it is natural it should be so, for he was the ablest general, and to me, seemed the greatest man I ever conversed with ; and yet I have had the privilege of meeting Von Moltke and Prince Bismarck, and at least upon one occasion had a very long and intensely interesting conversation with the latter. General Lee was one of the few men who ever seriously impressed and awed me with their natural, their inherent greatness. Forty years have come and gone since our meeting, yet the majesty of his manly bearing, the genial winning grace, the sweetness of his smile and the impressive dignity of his old-fashioned style of address, come back to me amongst the most cherished of my recollections. His greatness made me humble, and I never felt my own individual insignificance more keenly than I did in his presence. He was then about fifty years of age, with hair and beard nearly white. Tall, extremely handsome and strongly built, very soldier-like in bearing, he looked a thoroughbred gentleman. Care had, however, already wrinkled his brow, and there came at moments a look of sadness into his clear, honest, and speaking dark brown eyes that indicated how much his overwhelming national responsibility had already told

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upon him. As he listened to you attentively, he seemed to look into your heart and to search your brain. He spoke of the future with confidence, though one could clearly see he was of no very sanguine temperament. He deplored the bitterness introduced into the struggle, and also the treatment of the Southern folk who fell into hostile hands. But there was no rancour in his tone when he referred to the Northern Government. Not even when he described how they had designedly destroyed his home at Arlington Heights, the property on the Potomac he had inherited from General Washington. He had merely "gone with his State"—Virginia—the pervading principle that had influenced most of the soldiers I spoke with during my visit to the South. His was indeed a beautiful character, and of him it might truthfully be written: "In righteousness he did judge and make war."

I ventured to mention his recent battle at Antietam Creek, and he at once talked of its incidents in a frank, open way. He assured me, as I have already stated, that at no period of it had he more than 35,000 men in action, the remainder of his troops being shoeless stragglers in rear, unable to reach the front in time for his attack upon MacClellan's position. He estimated the Northern army then opposed to him at about twice his own strength. Things had gone wrong, as they so often unexpectedly do in war, and Jackson was thereby prevented from reaching the battlefield as soon as intended. He discussed the proceedings of the day most frankly, and with very full and interesting detail. He spoke very nicely of General MacClellan, and of the electric effect his reappointment to command the Northern army had had upon all its soldiers. It was this, I gathered from his conversation, that had, in

## THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM

his opinion, alone saved Washington from capture by the army with which he had invaded Maryland. This recall of MacClellan had not been foreseen, as his recent campaign in the Peninsula had been so disastrous a failure. The well-known jealousy entertained of him by the Ministers, Staunton, Seward, and General Halleck, was so great, on account of the attachment felt for him by all ranks in the Northern army, that his recall to power had not been regarded as a possible factor in the calculation of chances which determined the invasion of Maryland.

The result was that when it did take place, Lee's immediate designs upon Washington were checkmated. The sudden irruption of a Southern army into Maryland had been, however, in many ways an advantage to the Confederacy. With about 35,000 men Lee had fought a drawn battle with MacClellan, then holding a well chosen position with about 70,000 Northern soldiers. In this very short campaign Lee had captured some 14,000 prisoners, over fifty guns, and great quantities of stores of all sorts. This he had done without loss in guns or prisoners on his side. In subsequently discussing the events of that day with General Longstreet, he assured me that if he had had but 5,000 fresh men towards evening he must have annihilated the Northern army. He said that many of his men were without ammunition, and that all had been exhausted by heavy marching for some days previously.

General Lee halted all the day after the battle in presence of the Northern army, and thus offered MacClellan battle, but the latter did not think it advisable to accept the challenge.

With the Southern army there was a total absence of all that is usually so satisfying to the artistic eye in the

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camps and bivouacs of Europe. General Lee's Headquarters consisted of merely some seven or eight small tents pitched along a snake fence, where the ground was bad and rocky. The camp followers were all slaves, and the mounted orderlies—called "couriers" in America—usually slept in the open, under carts or waggons. There were no military bands, no guards or sentries about, no busy staff officers told off to interview visitors and keep them from worrying their general. In fact, there was nothing of the "pomp, pride, and circumstance of glorious war" to be seen in the camp of these earnest patriot soldiers. As I waited outside General Lee's tent whilst his Aide de Camp entered to tell him who I was, and to deliver to him my letter from the Confederate Secretary for War, I remarked it had the name of a Colonel of some New Jersey regiment printed largely upon it. Subsequently I chafingly referred to the fact in my conversations with him. He laughed and said, "Oh, you will find every tent, every gun, even our blankets, accoutrements, and all the military equipment we possess, stamped with the United States initials."

Poor Southern people! they were not a manufacturing community, yet, with all the fighting instincts of our own Border races, they contrived to supply their most pressing military wants in accordance with the well known old Border motto, "You shall want ere I want."

Shortly afterwards I had the advantage of an interview with General Jackson, always spoken of then and to be remembered for all time as "Stonewall Jackson": a man of stern principles, who took seriously whatever he had to do and in whom the beautiful side to his character had been developed by this war. What a hero! and yet how

## STONEWALL JACKSON

simple, how humble-minded a man ! In manner he was very different from General Lee, and I can class him with no one whom I have ever met or read of in history. Like the great commander whom he served with such knightly loyalty, he was deeply religious, but more austere, more Puritan in type. Both were great soldiers, yet neither had any Gothlike delight in war. He did not, as Lee did, give one the idea of having been born to the hereditary right of authority over others. General Lee, the very type, physically and socially, of a proud Cavalier, would certainly have fought for his king had he lived when Rupert charged at Naseby ; Jackson would have been more at home amongst Cromwell's Ironsides upon that fatal June 14. More than any one I can remember, Jackson seemed a man in whom great strength of character and obstinate determination were mated with extreme gentleness of disposition and with absolute tenderness towards all about him.

I had expected to see in Stonewall Jackson something of the religious moroseness we find attributed to the Commonwealth Puritan in our Restoration literature ; but he was, instead, most genial and forthcoming during the extremely pleasant hour I spent in his tent. In repose it might be said there was something sad about the expression of this most remarkable man's face. As his impressive eyes met yours unflinchingly, you knew that his was an honest heart. His closely compressed lips might have lent a harsh coldness to his features had not his face been lit up by a fascinating smile which added to the intense benignity of expression that his Maker had stamped upon it. In all the likenesses I have seen of him this marked characteristic is wanting. But how rare it is to find it even in the pictures of saints and angels by the greatest artists. In their en-



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deavours to represent it on canvas or in marble most have missed that bright light of highly gifted benevolence and spiritual contentment which, without doubt, must have pre-eminently distinguished the face of "Him whom they crucified."

Lee was a born aristocrat in features and in manner. There was nothing of these refined characteristics in Stonewall Jackson, a man with huge hands and feet. But he possessed an assured self-confidence, the outcome of an absolute trust in God, that inspired his soldiers with an unquestioning belief in him as their leader. They did not ask him where he was going : they were content to follow him. Many were the stories told me on this score during my stay in Virginia. On the march through a village one day a father standing at his door saw his boy go by in the ranks. "Where are you bound for?" asked the parent as he grasped his son's hand. "I don't know, but old Jack does," was the prompt reply. That was enough for this young soldier ; it was enough for every man who fought under Stonewall Jackson.<sup>1</sup>

General Jackson spoke a good deal of a visit he had once paid to England, and referred with pleasure to much that he had seen here. He knew most of our great historic points of interest and was well read in the events which had made them famous. Before our conversation ended I asked him which of all the recollections he had carried away with him from England was that upon which his memory loved most to dwell. He thought for a couple of minutes,

<sup>1</sup> "Old Jack" was his nickname when a youth at the far-famed Military School of "Westpoint" (the best of such schools to be found in any country) and it was generally used by his soldiers during this great war as a term of affection for the leader they loved and would follow wherever he led them.

## GENERAL LONGSTREET

and then, turning upon me those remarkable eyes, lit up for the moment with a look of real enthusiasm, he answered, "The seven lancet windows in York Minster."

In the midst of a bloody war, in which his life was to be eventually given for his country, his thoughts were at least sometimes fixed upon peace as its blessed quiet appeals to most of us when in any of our glorious Gothic Cathedrals. I have often since then stood in front of those beautiful windows, but never without thinking of the great American patriot in whose thoughts the remembrance of them had been carried into the battlefields of Virginia.

I spent a very pleasant afternoon with General Longstreet, then highly esteemed as one of Lee's best fighting divisional leaders. He had an excellent staff about him, all of whom tried to vie with the admirable horsemanship of their general. Longstreet was very fond of horses, and rode very fine well bred animals. He was stout and florid in complexion, and looked much younger than either Lee or Stonewall Jackson. But his openly expressed hatred of Mr. Lincoln and of the Administration ruled over by that very remarkable man, was intense and bitter. When, after the war had ended, Longstreet took employment under the United States Government, his old Southern associates ceased to regard him with the affection and respect he had inspired them with upon many a well fought battlefield. A brilliant leader and a hard hitter, his stories of the war were most interesting. I saw his division march past. It was a remarkable sight and never to be forgotten, for it was unlike anything I have ever seen, or until then had ever imagined. The men were badly, I might say wretchedly, clothed, and still worse shod. But I was told that the very worst had stayed away from the ordeal of having to parade

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

their wretchedness before a stranger. I had pointed out to me many men of large properties who were then trudging along in the ranks, undistinguishable from the mass of those around them, except that, as a rule, each of them carried a toothbrush stuck into a buttonhole of his jacket ! All their belts and pouches were marked in large letters with the U.S., which showed they had been taken from their enemy. They marched past well, and, poorly clad as they were, with a fine soldierlike bearing that convinced all onlookers like myself that they were no mere imported hirelings, but citizens fighting for a cause they believed in, were proud to suffer for, and were prepared to die for. This Southern army interested me beyond any army I ever saw before or since.

I had much difficulty in getting away from Virginia, and I confess I left General Lee's army with the deepest regret. It was an army of heroes fighting, practically without pay, for that they held dearest in life, their "States' rights."

It is for the dispassionate student of history to gauge : 1st, the extent to which free communication with the markets of Europe would have helped the Confederates ; and, 2nd, what would have been the issue, as far as the Confederacy was concerned, had not Mr. Lincoln, with his shrewd and characteristic wisdom, acceded to our demand for the immediate surrender of Messrs. Mason and Slidell ? How often since then have I speculated as to what would now be the distribution of national sovereignty upon the North American continent had our demand been then refused at Washington ?

I would ask my reader to study what the Confederate States did achieve even when cut off, as they were, from all external help, and to remember the victories they won

## STATES' RIGHTS

with armies much smaller than those opposed to them, and composed of men often barefoot and hungry, as well as destitute of all military equipment beyond their rifles, field guns and ammunition they had taken in battle from their enemy. They were absolutely cut off from all the markets where they could have purchased what they so urgently needed; their cause indeed seemed hopeless.

I do not enter into the question of whether their eventual independence as a separate power would or would not have been a benefit to America generally or to the outside world. I confine myself exclusively to the question in its military and naval aspects. But as a close student of war all my life, and especially of this Confederate war, and with a full knowledge of the battles fought during its progress, and regarding this question as a simple military and naval problem, I believe that, had the ports of the Southern States been kept open to the markets of the world by the action of any great naval power, the Confederacy must have secured their independence. Such at least is the dispassionate opinion of an outsider. Surely the time has come when the men of what is now the greatest Power on earth—the present United States of America—can afford to hear such an opinion without any feeling against the soldier who states it for what it is worth. Of this at least I am certain, that no outsider can have a deeper, a more sincere admiration than I have for their institutions, their people, their great soldiers and sailors, as well as for their writers and men of science.

Had I been a "Southerner" in 1861 I would certainly have thrown in my lot with the Confederacy, for I believed that "right" in the abstract, in the legal sense, was on its side. But had I been a "Northerner," I would have

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

laughed at all notions of "States' rights." The United States would have been for me one Power, whole and indivisible, and I would have fought to the death sooner than have seen that power broken up upon any lawyer's plea regarding the interpretation of the words in which the "deed" of Union had been originally drafted. Such at the time was my view as an outsider of the all-absorbing question that was discussed in strong and excited language, both north and south of the Potomac, when Mr. Lincoln was elected President.

My own sympathy since boyhood has always been with the strongly national squire, who, when asked for an after-dinner toast, said: "Here's to England (cheers); may she always be in the right (still louder cheers), but, by heavens, gentlemen, here's to her, whether she be right or wrong!" (Deafening cheers.)

In the great American struggle I refer to, that old-fashioned squire's sentiment regarding England represented the feelings of both the Northern and Southern States for the cause each had adopted. Surely the true patriot of all nations must sincerely respect such a heartfelt sentiment of intense nationality, for is it not the only sound foundation upon which nations can continue to be great? And may I not assert with equal confidence that it is because that sentiment so deeply influences the hearts of the United States people that they have become the foremost nation in the world, far greater than Washington and his able colleagues could ever have hoped for or even dreamt of.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### Reorganization of the Canadian Militia, 1864-5

THE "Trent Affair" had caused all Canadians to study seriously how defenceless would be their province should we be forced into war with the United States. Hitherto the people of Canada had been too prone to rely upon England for protection. Urged, however, by the Governor-General to adopt some line of military policy that would at least make those who ruled in "the old country" anxious to help them effectively in case of need, the Canadian Government now set to work upon the re-organization of their local Militia. The large cities and most of the important towns had already created some tolerably fair Volunteer battalions, but it was desirable to place all the local forces upon some better established military system, and, above all things, to model them upon the lines of our Regular Army, with which they would have to act in the event of war.

Upon the close of the Confederate war, the Canadian Government began at last to realize how unprotected was the long straggling frontier which divided their provinces from those of the United States. They perceived how open it was to any filibustering attempt on the part of the numerous Fenians who were then idle and anxious for a "light job."

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Public opinion in Canada, excited on this point, soon compelled the party in power to adopt measures for the creation of an efficient defensive force. The first step towards the reorganization of the Canadian Militia, was to obtain the services of a thoroughly able soldier to organize and command it. His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge wisely selected General Patrick MacDougall for this duty, and no better selection could have been made. He was very able, highly educated as a soldier in his profession, and was gifted with the most charming, the most fascinating manner towards all men—by no means a poor recommendation for any one who has to get on well with politicians. He had also the great advantage of knowing Canada and its good people thoroughly, from having formerly served there many years.

The task before him was difficult, for some of the Canadian Militia officers, although they had other professional work to attend to, believed they knew more about soldiers and their science than those whose sole profession the Army had always been. They had some reason, however, for this belief, as the best of our Canadian officers, and those best were very good, had been long accustomed to much folly and many silly prejudices on the part of our old-fashioned and professionally ignorant Army officers. Even up to the date I am writing about, many of our old captains and colonels knew little of their work beyond the childish manœuvres of a barrack-yard parade ground. But our Canadian comrades had not then become aware of the fact that, since our war with Russia, a new army school had arisen amongst us, by whom the study of their profession, both as a science and an art, was recognized as all important.

No man knew better than General MacDougall the

## THE LA PRAIRIE CAMP

difference there is between the educated officer and the ordinary amateur in uniform, and the best of the Canadian Militia soon came to recognize their new commandant's military worth, and the value of the new system he introduced. It was, however, very uphill work, for he never could induce Canadian Ministers to supply him with the funds required to start schools of instruction upon an adequate scale. There is no idle or "leisured" class in any part of Canada. Every one has to work there, and it is not easy for the hard-toiling man in any office to spare even a few hours per week for the study and practice of the military arts and science. Colonel MacDougall began the heavy task before him by the creation of an efficient Militia Staff, and of military schools at every station where we had regular troops. At these schools Militia officers were to be taught, and young Canadian gentlemen rendered fit for the position of officers. After these schools had been a season at work, he collected those who had qualified at them in a camp he formed at the old disused barrack of La Prairie, which is south of the St. Lawrence River, near Montreal. He asked me to be its Commandant, and, always anxious for any interesting employment, I gladly accepted the offer. These cadets were formed into two battalions, one of upper, the other of lower Canadians, and two excellent officers of the Canadian militia were selected to command them.

I found these young gentlemen delightful to deal with, all being seriously anxious to learn a soldier's work.

The more drill they were given the more they enjoyed their camp life. I may say, that it was at the La Prairie Camp, nearly all the best Militia officers of that generation were drilled and given some practical knowledge of military duties.



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

I found they made excellent officers; they were thinking and yet practical men, without any of the pedantry which too often clings to the young officers of all Regular Armies. My own experience of Canada, and of its fine loyal manly people, has taught me that England can always depend upon the Canadian Militia to supply her with a first-rate division under Canadian officers, who are not to be surpassed in military characteristics of a high order by any other troops. It is much to be regretted that the supply of officers required for our Royal Canadian Regiment is not left to the Governor-General of Canada, as none but Canadian gentlemen should, I think, be appointed to it. But military or colonial sentiment is not usually understood or appreciated by our civilian War Ministers.

One of the ablest, and professionally one of the best read officers I ever knew, is Colonel George Denison, of Toronto, who for many years commanded the Governor-General of Canada's Bodyguard. The descendant of many generations of gallant soldiers, who have, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, fought for the British Crown in Canada, he would have been a military leader of note in any army he joined. It is much to be regretted that he did not adopt the Army as a profession. Had he done so he must have risen to eminence. He gained the prize offered by the Emperor of Russia for the best essay on cavalry, which was a great distinction, as it was open to the officers of all nations. During the annoyance caused to Canada by the Fenians, I came to know him well. With the Bodyguard he patrolled the left bank of the Niagara River above the falls whilst the excitement lasted. They were just the corps for that work,

## GENERAL THE HON. JAMES LINDSAY

and he was just the man to command them effectively. I realized at the time that no similar number of regular cavalry could have done that duty as effectively. But he was a man in a thousand, and a born cavalry leader.

The lieutenant-colonel of the French-speaking battalion was somewhat of a martinet, and an indefatigable worker. He was a great talker, and many amusing anecdotes were told of him. The instructions he gave were always accompanied by a voluble commentary upon the points he sought to emphasize, and many of his remarks were very personal to the individual he selected for either praise or blame. Under him any similar number of Englishmen would have mutinied, but he knew his men, and they took his dictatorial sarcasm in the best spirit, and as if it were quite usual in our Army.

As I stood on his parade ground one morning, listening to his teaching, I felt it difficult at times to look serious. In the middle of one of his long sentences a horrible noise was made by a man in the front rank as he spat in front of him. My French-speaking colonel rushed at him, and in the most angry tone exclaimed, "*C'est défendu de cracher dans le rangs.*" No man in his battalion smiled, for all seemed to think it a most natural injunction.

I liked all those whom I met at this camp, and thoroughly enjoyed my life there. General the Hon. James Lindsay—a first-rate soldier and a most charming man—who was then commanding our troops in the Quebec province, helped me much, and took a deep interest in my work. He marched the Montreal Garrison of infantry and field artillery to La Prairie, and with my two battalions of cadets we had an instructive field day, which my embryo warriors thoroughly enjoyed. I refer thus to this La

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Prairie Camp, because it was the birthplace of the very fine Canadian Militia force with which I was subsequently intimately associated, and because it was, I think, the first practical effort made to convert the excellent military material Canada possesses so abundantly, into useful soldiers. A considerable number of those trained at La Prairie subsequently accompanied me in the expedition I led in 1870 from Lake Superior to the Red River, and no commander could wish to have better soldiers than those of the two Canadian militia battalions who constituted the bulk of the brigade I then had with me. Our young officers of the regular army, are too prone to depend upon regulations which are apt to dwarf their natural military instincts in positions where the Canadian officer would act according to the common sense that is within him. For the admirable results obtained at La Prairie, we were chiefly indebted to the ability and exertions of Sir Patrick MacDougall, who loved Canada and its people, and thoroughly appreciated the fine manly race of both British and French origin who inhabit its many beautiful provinces. I had a very interesting time at this camp, and, taking it altogether, the experiment was a great success. It was, in fact, the first important step taken by the Canadian Government in my time to improve the military efficiency of its local forces. Every young gentleman who took part in our short period of training there returned home, not only a better soldier himself, but more capable than he was before of teaching others.

Later on, this was felt to be a still more pressing matter when a large number of drilled Irish soldiers were suddenly thrown upon the world after the disbandment of the huge armies raised by the United States for the Confederate War. A considerable proportion of these idle Irishmen then openly

## THE AMERICAN FENIANS

declared themselves as Fenians, and indeed all seemed to be more partial to any sort of filibustering expedition than to any form of hard and continued employment in civil life. These disbanded Irish soldiers constituted an element of danger to Canada at a time when the Fenian leaders generally were specially anxious to hurt England through Canada in all possible ways. How much reason have we in England to deplore the folly which has been so remarkable a feature in the system under which we have for the last four centuries made blundering efforts to rule a much cleverer and a far more imaginative race than ourselves !

Most of us in Canada, who were thinkers on such matters, had long believed we should have trouble with these Fenians as soon as the Confederate War came to an end, and our expectations proved too true. In many of the United States towns and cities upon the Canadian frontier the so-called Irish patriots established clubs, and at many of these places the Fenians were organized on paper into battalions, with the usual proportion of officers and non-commissioned officers in each.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### Attempted Fenian Invasion of Canada in 1866

**D**URING the winter of 1865-6 the managers of the Fenian organization in the United States had secretly formed a scheme for the invasion of Canada. With bold effrontery they pretended to have been assured of support from the Government at Washington, and this gave the movement an importance that secured it large subscriptions from the Irish Catholics in America. During the Confederate War there had been a considerable number of Irish in the northern ranks, who being now out of employment were anxious for another fighting job. I presume there were some honest leaders in the movement who believed they would really be countenanced by the United States Government, whose members it was said were hostile to England for the supposed countenance she had lent to the Confederate cause in the recent struggle. But if this were so, they must have been easily led astray by scheming revolutionists.

Our spies, and we had several in the Fenian ranks, reported that the invasion would take place in the summer of 1866. The "Fenian circles," as their local organizations were called, were said to be in great activity preparing for this event. The chief centre for their proposed invasion was the large and prosperous city of Buffalo in the State of New

## THE FENIANS IN PRESCOTT

York, and at the head of the Niagara River. We had long known that another of their active centres was the city of Ogdensburg, in the same State, and some sixty miles below where the St. Lawrence River leaves Lake Ontario. It is opposite the Canadian town of Prescott, and from its neighbourhood came much of our information as to the doings and intentions of this conspiracy. We accordingly kept a watch upon both those cities, whose hotels abounded in so-called colonels, captains, etc., the majority of whom were in every respect of the commonest order of Irish mankind. Of course there were traitors amongst them, who for payment supplied us with information secretly as to their doings and intentions.

Early in the spring of 1866 an officer of the Canadian militia staff crossed in plain clothes to Ogdensburg, to have what is there called "a good look around." He eventually dined at the *table d'hôte* of an inn that was largely frequented by the Fenian officers in the town. He was a well-born Irishman of exceptionally taking and genial manners who when a captain had lost his arm by a round shot as he stood beside me one day in the Crimea. He was quickly recognized to be a British officer by the "Irish patriots" present, and he saw they were anxious to be rude. Later on in the day, when all the diners had retired to the hotel drawing-room, one of the most truculent of these warriors swaggered up to my one-armed friend and said in a loud voice that was heard by all present, "You are a British officer; look well at me for I am a Fenian colonel." My friend, in the most genial tone replied, "The devil you are! I have never seen a Fenian before, and am very glad to have met one at last. I am an Irishman, so let us shake hands, my dear sir." This was said in no mocking voice,

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and in such a manner that no one could take offence at it, but it so completely turned the laugh against the swaggering Fenian that many tittered, and he was shut up, said no more, and sneaked away.

We are told that a soft answer turneth away wrath, yet in a company of Irishmen a witty answer, expressed in a cordial genial tone and manner is still more likely to save the position and prevent a quarrel.

The Canadian Government became at last so seriously alarmed at these Fenian proceedings that they called out 10,000 of their militia, in March, 1866. Much drill was given, but the Ottawa Ministers, so like our own in this respect, would make no effective preparations for a campaign—that might never come off—by the purchase of those stores and munitions without which not even the smallest fighting body can be suddenly placed in the field. The Canadians are a splendid race of men and they make first-rate soldiers, but officers accustomed to command, or who were even instructed in the art of commanding, were then few. This is the weak side of all militia forces that are rarely assembled for instruction, but it is difficult to convince the officers themselves of this fact. Any one can learn in a few weeks to shout out the drill-book words of command required for any military movement. That parrot-like accomplishment is easily learnt, but not so the art of commanding men, for it is essentially an art, and so high, so peculiar an art, that many officers even in all regular armies never master it. Good pleasant manners, closely allied to firmness, a genial disposition, a real sympathy for the private soldier, and an intimate knowledge of human nature, are essential qualifications for the man who would command soldiers effectively anywhere. The art is

## THE FENIAN MOVEMENT

born in some, and comes naturally to many. In peace or in war it is a quality more necessary for the officer than any knowledge he can acquire by a study of the drill-book, essential though that knowledge be.

I have no intention of going over the back pages of history to explain the origin of the Fenian movement which eventually led to the childish planned invasion of Canada in 1866. But as far as I am able to form an opinion from early acquaintance with the Irish people, the great factor in our Irish troubles, since the days of Queen Elizabeth, has been the difference of religion between the Roman Catholic peasantry and their Protestant landlords. The priests almost all spring from the former, and the professional men from the latter class. Of course there always were a few of the Catholic landowning gentry, who remained loyal to the British connexion, notwithstanding our cruel laws which at one time debarred them from all public employment.

It has been, I feel, this difference in religion that has kept the conquerors and the conquered so long apart in Ireland, and prevented any general amalgamation of the two races.

There had been a great emigration of Irish people into the United States since the dreadful Famine of 1848. They are a prolific race, and have largely increased in numbers there, but have not as yet supplied the American nation with presidents or great admirals or generals. In a country of universal suffrage, they, however, exercise great influence, for the Irish vote, always given solid, is a very important element in every presidential election. Hence I think the fact that a large proportion of those who made this raid upon Canada in 1866 firmly believed that the Washington Government would give them every countenance, if not material support in their proclaimed intention to rid the



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

North American continent of all British rule. So much was this the case, that their scheme fell to the ground as soon as they realized upon crossing into Canada that the United States Government would show them no countenance. There were also money troubles within the Fenian ranks, as most of its agents were needy adventurers. The care of and expenditure of the money collected in the United States from poor Irish servant girls and other sympathizers, soon gave rise to difficulties amongst the Fenian leaders. A large amount of bonds, made payable whenever the Fenians had established their authority in Canada, had been issued as a means for filling the coffers, and the distribution of the plunder their sale afforded led to disputes.

All through the latter half of May, 1866, we received intelligence from many quarters that the Fenians had made their preparations for the invasion of Canada, and meant very shortly to carry it out. During the last week of that month we received the news that many trains laden with Fenians had reached Buffalo. But still the Canadian authorities made no preparations to meet the coming attack. On the morning of June 1, 1866, however, all Canada was startled by the news that during the preceding night 1,500 Fenians had crossed the Niagara River from Buffalo in the State of New York, and had landed in Canada at Fort Erie, the site of a ruined and long disused British work. Fort Erie is the south-east corner of the great right-angled block of territory that constitutes the Niagara Peninsula.

Our general commanding in the province of Ontario was useless for any military purpose. A battalion of Canadian Militia had, however, been put under orders the night of May 31 to go by rail to Port Colborne the following morning and had started about daybreak for that town.

## FENIAN INVASION OF NIAGARA

Buffalo had been cleverly chosen by the Fenian leaders as a point of concentration for their invading force. Being a large city, the arrival of from 1,500 to 2,000 unarmed men would not attract much attention, and the place itself had long swarmed with Irish sympathizers.

Although the Government of Ottawa would do nothing beforehand to prepare for such a contingency, they now acted promptly. The greater part of the Canadian Volunteer Militia in Upper Canada were at once called out, and Colonel Peacocke, of the Bedfordshire Regiment, an able and well instructed officer, was placed in command of the Niagara Peninsula.

That Peninsula is one of the most fertile, most highly cultivated and most prosperous parts of Canada. It is a rectangular block of about forty-five miles long from east to west, and of about thirty miles in depth. The northern side is bounded by Lake Ontario, the southern by Lake Erie, the eastern by the Niagara River, whilst the 80th parallel of longitude may be taken as its western boundary from Burlington Bay on the north to Stony Creek on the south. A suspension bridge over the Niagara River near the Great Falls, united Canada with the State of New York. To complete our line of inland navigation between Quebec and the Great Upper Lakes, we had many years before constructed the Welland Canal through this Niagara Peninsula. It begins at Port Colborne, on Lake Erie, about sixteen miles west of Fort Erie, and falls into Lake Ontario at Port Dalhousie, which is about eleven miles south-west of where the Niagara River also falls into that lake.

Colonel Peacocke at first established his Headquarters at St. Catherine's, a place well chosen for the purpose. Pushing on to the suspension bridge over the Niagara River at Clifton,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

he found no enemy there, and being naturally anxious to hold Chippewa, a point of strategic importance, he reached that place on the night of June 1. Unfortunately he did not move the following morning, June 2, until 7 a.m., by which hour he might have been at New Germany, only six miles from Chippewa by the direct road. It was an extremely hot day, and as he had not left his knapsacks behind, the men suffered much in consequence during the march. Why he did not move by rail to Black Creek I know not, but it is easy to be wise after the event. His locally obtained guides were either fools by nature or through cowardice, for they took his column a great round by the river road to Black Creek and thence to New Germany. I shall not attempt to describe this insignificant attempt on the part of some 1,500 indifferently organized Irish Americans to invade Canada. It was throughout an extremely badly managed affair on both sides. Had our general at Toronto been a man of any energy, he would have gone at once himself to Chippewa with all available troops, and have marched thence direct upon the rabble party that had landed at Fort Erie. Had he done so, he might easily have killed a large number of those poor misguided Irishmen who had been induced to take part in this idiotic attempt at invasion. So idiotic was it as a military enterprise that I have always thought it must have been undertaken in order to fill the pockets of the patriot leaders.

A Militia colonel and a captain of the Royal Engineers, neither being either wise or experienced soldiers, had been sent to Port Colborne, the southern entrance to the Welland Canal, at the same time that Colonel Peacocke had been sent to Chippewa. Ordered to proceed thence in a tug, and with some Militia as a guard on board, for the purpose of recon-

## THE CANADIAN MILITIA

noitring Fort Erie and of patrolling the Niagara River as far north as Navy Island, they took it upon themselves to land their men at Fort Erie instead. There they were attacked by the Fenians and their detachment was mostly either killed, wounded or captured. The Militia colonel in command escaped in borrowed civilian's clothes ; having shaved his beard and whiskers he temporarily found refuge in a rick of hay. Another colonel of Militia when on the march in command of his battalion, came suddenly upon the enemy at a cross roads called Ridgeway. Thus surprised, he and his battalion, after some loss on both sides, were soon in full retreat at no slow pace. In the formation he had advanced in, he was bound to be surprised, and when some nervous men, upon seeing a few Fenian officers on horseback in the distance, cried out in panic, "Cavalry," the wildest confusion ensued. Had the Fenians been worth anything as soldiers few of their opponents would have supped that night in their own bivouac. It was a short skirmish between two small parties of undisciplined, untrained men, and it was, I should imagine, a toss up which side disbanded first. Speaking from my own experience of the Canadian Militia I have every reason to think most highly of, and to believe thoroughly in them when they are properly handled. Had they been so handled in their skirmishes during this Fenian raid, they would, I feel sure, have bagged every Irish American who had then landed at Fort Erie. There would have been no stampede that day on the Ridge Road had the Militia engaged been commanded by a Militia officer like Colonel George Denison, of the Canadian Bodyguard.

As soon as the news of this Fenian raid reached Montreal, General Sir John Michael, then commanding the forces in

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Canada, sent me off in hot haste to the seat of this trouble. Major-General Napier, who commanded in the province of Ontario, was not a shining light, and I was told to "coach" him and prevent him from doing anything very foolish. I knew General Napier personally very well, and upon reaching Toronto the following morning he at once adopted all the measures I recommended. Indeed, he seemed delighted to have someone by him whose advice he could follow. In private life a charming man, he was quite useless at all times as a commander. And yet he was a fair specimen of the general then usually selected for military commands. Before my arrival he had ordered a Battery of Field Artillery, and what odds and ends could be scraped together in Toronto and its neighbourhood, to leave that evening for the Niagara frontier under my esteemed Crimean friend, Colonel, now General R. W. Lowry, C.B., then commanding the 1st Battalion of the North Lancashire Regiment. A gallant Irishman, belonging to an old and distinguished family of fighting men, it was now his business to snuff out the silly efforts made by an Irish-American party to disturb our rule in Canada. His battalion had already gone to the front, where he was to be joined by detachments of the Bedfordshire Regiment and of the Royal Rifles. Upon reaching Clifton at 8 p.m. that evening by rail, the railway authorities declined to send us any further until daylight the following morning, as they thought the bridges and culverts on the line had probably been destroyed. At midnight we were joined by a battalion of volunteers.

We started from Clifton by rail the following morning, June 3, 1866, at 3.30 a.m., for Black Creek, on the Niagara River, a distance of only ten miles. We only travelled at

## A DRUNKEN FEMALE FENIAN

about four or five miles an hour, so as to be able to pull up very quickly should the line be cut or otherwise obstructed. We were detained there a couple of hours until the railway authorities had examined the line ahead, and did not get away from it until 7 a.m., when we made for Frenchman's Creek, six miles further on. We detrained at Frenchman's Creek, as Colonel Lowry intended to march thence upon Fort Erie, which was close by, and engage our Fenian enemy should he be there still. I soon had my horse out of its box and rode forward to reconnoitre towards Fort Erie. Upon reaching it, I was astonished to see a United States gunboat anchored in midstream with a huge barge astern of her that was crowded with Fenians, as we afterwards ascertained to the number of about six or seven hundred. They had evidently bivouacked on the river's bank before embarking in the barge, for all around the ground was filthy and their surgeons had evidently been at work patching up some of their wounded. The first object that attracted my attention was a drunken Irishwoman, who, apparently as a defiance to me, the English officer before her, flourished over her head an amputated leg, which she had grasped round the ankle, crying out to me as she did so, "God save ould Ireland." The position was disgusting, but yet as comical as that of the drunken old lady, who, when being taken to the Police Office in Dublin, on March 17, kept howling out, "Oh! blessed and holy St. Patrick, see what I'm suffering for you this night"!

At Fort Erie we found a few Fenian wounded and one of their dead, also some wounded Canadian Volunteers. In the afternoon Colonel Lowry and I went on board the U.S. gunboat, *Michigan*, which had the barge-full of Fenians fastened on astern. There we found General Barry, of the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

United States Army, who commanded at Buffalo. He and the naval officer commanding the gunboat were both well bred gentlemen and received us kindly. So ended this fiasco of a Fenian invasion. Of course the United States Government could have prevented it from ever taking place. But in a country whose supreme ruler and all his subordinate governors are elected by the people every few years, it is not always practically possible for them to adopt strong measures for the suppression of even such a nuisance as a Fenian raid. It was our policy throughout this business carefully to avoid taking any steps which the Fenians could preach up in their newspapers as a violation of American territory or as an injury done by us to some law-abiding citizen of the great Republic.

Late in the summer of this year, 1866, the Canadian Government deemed it advisable to form a camp in the Niagara Peninsula. The Fenians in the United States still continued to talk loudly of invading Ontario, and if they could effect no permanent lodgment there, they hoped at least to destroy the Welland Canal. Even supposing no such invasion had to be guarded against, it was felt that a short period in camp would afford the Ontario Militia an opportunity of learning the practical duties of soldiers in the field to an extent they could not hope for at their own homes. Thorold, a village on the Welland Canal was selected as the site for this camp, and I was selected to be its Commandant. It was a well chosen position on account of its railroad facilities. A battalion of the Bedfordshire Regiment and a Field Battery of Royal Artillery were to be at Thorold as long as the Camp remained there, for the purpose of affording instruction to the Militia Force employed. The Militia were to come in batches of four or five battalions at a time for a period of ten

## THOROLD CAMP

days' instruction. It was hoped in this way, at a small expense and without interfering seriously with the usual occupations of the men, to afford much useful and practical instruction to all ranks. I found them delightful men to deal with ; all were most anxious to learn, and they were apt scholars.

The Governor-General's bodyguard, under Colonel George Denison, was placed under my orders as long as the camp lasted, to watch the Niagara frontier from Chippewa to Fort Erie and westward from the latter point as far as Ridgeway. Between these two extreme points was about thirty-two miles, a long distance to be well and closely watched day and night by a troop of three officers and fifty-five mounted men. But what could be done with such a handful of men was well done by them and by their excellent outpost commander.

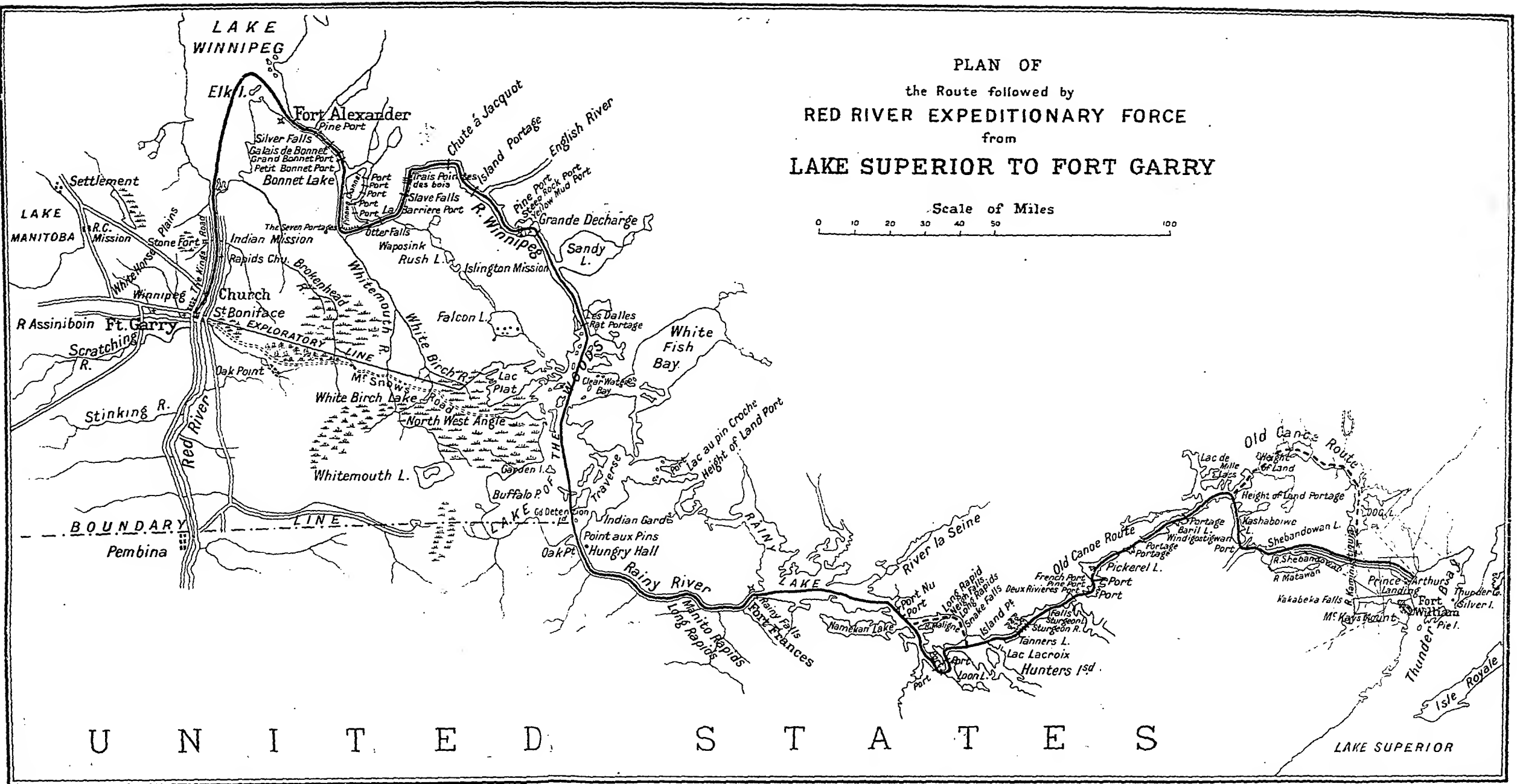
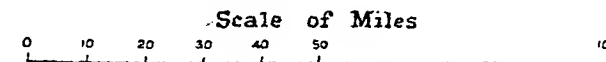
This camp attracted large numbers of sightseers from both Canada and the United States. The Fenians across the border still continued to talk loudly of annexing Canada, and letters appeared in the United States newspapers in which Irish conspirators intimated their intention to try once more an invasion of the Niagara Peninsula and the destruction of the Welland Canal. A considerable number of Ontario Militia battalions attended this camp, and I had a renewed opportunity of being brought into close relationship with many of the best of the Canadian officers at that period. All stout, loyal-hearted men, to be depended upon in any hour of national trouble, and all anxious to learn a soldier's trade ; no finer material for an army could be found in any country, and they were always the nicest and the best of friends and comrades. The district we were encamped in is rich in apple and peach orchards. These are not only



## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

beautiful, but very valuable also from the great quantity of excellent fruit they produce. I had a very happy time there, and was visited by many old friends and made several new ones.

PLAN OF  
the Route followed by  
RED RIVER EXPEDITIONARY FORCE  
from  
LAKE SUPERIOR TO FORT GARRY



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### The Red River Expedition of 1870

THE year 1870 stands out as a striking epoch in the history of modern Europe. During its early months two great military nations were eagerly engaged in making ready for a struggle that was to end in once more driving the representative of the Bonaparte family from the throne of France. The whole civilized world was profoundly anxious at the moment, for no nation could foretell the limits within which it might be possible to restrict military operations. All the great continental powers were armed to the teeth, and in such a condition of affairs it was difficult to foresee what any day might bring forth, or what might be the unpleasant upheavals which the general whirligig of fortune might have in store for mankind.

Whilst all was thus in ferment upon the Continent of Europe, a small military expedition of an unusual character was being organized in Canada on the western shores of Lake Superior. Its destination was Fort Garry, the chief post of the Hudson Bay Company in the great province now known as Winnipeg, but then generally spoken of as Prince Rupert's Land. It had been named after the gallant nephew of Charles I, who had made himself famous by land and sea in doing battle for the Crown more than two centuries before.

To describe the circumstances that rendered this expedition necessary would lead me far beyond this story of my

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

own doings into a discussion on Canadian politics. Suffice it to say, that the Hudson Bay Company claimed the exclusive right to govern all the British territories whose waters drained into the seas from which their trading title had its origin. These territories were little known, and the Company had always seemed anxious to avoid discussing their geographical boundaries. They desired to maintain the exclusive right to trade with all the Indians who inhabited that part of North America, and they never encouraged travellers or explorers in the undefined provinces which they claimed as their chartered and legal property. It would indeed have been commercially suicidal on the part of that Company to have helped forward in any way the colonization of their territory, as, amongst other reasons, the spread of civilization meant the ultimate extinction of the fur-bearing animals that supply the staple article which the Indians barter with them.

When our North American Colonies were brought together to form the present Dominion of Canada, their united importance was quickly recognized. The Dominion Government was anxious to put an end to this ill-defined and disputed claim to ownership on the part of the Hudson Bay Company. Upon all sides it was realized that the days for such monopolies were past, and after lengthened negotiations it was decided that Canada should pay the Company £300,000 for all its supposed sovereign rights over the territory in question.

But this arrangement, which would open the country to colonization, did not find favour with the clerical party in Canada. Priests from the French-speaking province of Quebec, and Jesuit missionaries from France, had been long established in the western prairies of the Hudson Bay

## THE HUDSON BAY COMPANY

Company. They had acquired influence and power amongst the Indians, of whom many had joined a religious community whose rites, mysteries, ornaments and striking ceremonies appealed to their simple yet superstitious minds.

The English and the Scotch Churches had also representatives there, but their cold formalities and reasoned notions of God did not take root in the uneducated Indian's heart. The white men living in this north-western region were almost equally divided between the Protestant and the Catholic Churches. The former, however, were divided into many phases of Church government; and seldom, if ever, worked together. A large proportion of the Company's servants were Scotch Presbyterians, and a first-rate body of men they were. On the other hand, the French-speaking inhabitants were all of one religion, and ruled over by a clever, cunning, unscrupulous bishop. He was strongly opposed to this transfer of the Hudson Bay Company's sovereign rights to the Dominion of Canada. The Company had never taken any side in questions of religion, but, finding this wily French bishop a power in the land, they had used him to keep the country quiet and free from intruders. There were consequently two forces, both—though with different objects—working to keep this Red River Company closed to immigration, the Hudson Bay Company and the French Canadian priesthood. The small colony of Scotchmen who had been settled there by Lord Selkirk in 1812 had already been practically absorbed into the service of the Hudson Bay Company, only a few families remaining permanently established upon the fertile lands along the banks of the Red River. Of these two forces the first object of the former was a good annual dividend: of the latter, the permanence of their own position; as

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

spiritual and secular leaders, and the strict reservation of the Red River country for settlers coming from Lower Canada only. They dreamt of building up in that far off north-western land another French province where the language, laws, and, above all things, the religion of Quebec might be perpetuated. It was gall and wormwood to all who had inherited French names to see Canada, a country originally civilized by France, becoming year by year more and more English in its ways, thoughts and ambitions. All French Canadians saw with envy and dread the steadily increasing power and position of western Canada—now the great province of Ontario. But if they could create a new French-speaking country westward of the great lakes, they believed it would, in the end, become a counterpoise to the growing preponderance of British Ontario. This feeling had given birth to the strong tie then existing between the French-Canadian wire-pullers at Ottawa and the French-Canadian priests who had migrated to the Red River Settlement. All this plot, however, fell to pieces, like a castle of cards, the day I hoisted the Union Jack over Fort Garry.

But the English in Ontario were not blind to these French-Canadian aims. A few of them had already made homes for themselves in that prairie country, and by degrees had formed themselves into a British-Canadian party there. Those two opposing sections were respectively supported by the Press of Ontario and of Quebec, and by members of Parliament who represented constituencies in those two provinces, whilst the Roman priesthood did all in their power to give a religious aspect to the dispute.

The Government of Ottawa has always a difficult card to play between those two factions. Pressure was, however, put upon the Prime Minister by the people of Ontario, and

## LOUIS RIEL

the result was the despatch to the Red River district of some surveyors with orders to divide the still unallotted lands into townships with a view to emigration. The off-hand manners of these English-speaking surveyors did not find favour with the French Canadians in that distant settlement. At work throughout all the autumn of 1869, these surveyors not only offended but frightened the French-speaking occupants by running chain-lines across their farms without being able to explain to them, in the only tongue they spoke, their reasons for doing so. The ignorant French "habitant" very naturally jumped to the conclusion that there was some plot on foot to rob him of the land he occupied and had partially cultivated, but for which he could show no written title.

In every community there is usually a restless and more or less idle party, and in 1869 the Red River Settlement was no exception to this rule. Encouraged by the Catholic priesthood of the locality, these discontented settlers went amongst the French-speaking farmers, and persuaded them that the surveyors had come to apportion their lands into lots for English-speaking emigrants from Ontario. They even openly preached resistance to these surveyors in defence of their rights, their homes, and their religion.

The foremost man amongst these noisy idlers was Louis Riel, a pure French Canadian, though generally referred to as a half-breed. He had, however, many half-breed relations, and wished for political purposes to be considered one himself. He was naturally clever, had been educated in a Canadian Roman Catholic school, and at one time seems to have had thoughts of becoming a priest. This calling did not, however, accord with the aims of so restless a disposition. Eventually he became a clerk in a United States shop, from which, after a few years' work, he was dismissed

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

for dishonesty. Whilst in the United States he learnt to speak English intelligibly. There also he conceived the idea, that in the ignorant community of Red River half-breeds his superior ability and education ought to secure him an easy mode of livelihood. In all countries the occupation of demagogue has much to tempt the idle fellow of sharp wits. Those who knew him best told me that physically he was by no means brave; his actions, however, proved he was a man of determination. He spoke well and fluently, and thus obtained considerable influence amongst the numerous and ignorant half-breeds in his far distant native country.

He soon gathered round him a small party of idle fellows like himself, but their difficulty was to support themselves. None of them had any money, and until they took possession of Fort Garry and the Hudson Bay Company stores it contained, they were so badly off that Riel had to sell the only cow possessed by his mother. She, poor woman, had lived always in abject poverty, and her son had not been able to help her much.

To cause their importance to be generally recognized on the Red River, Riel and his followers found it necessary to commit some overt act of rebellion. They began in October, 1869, by warning a surveying party to quit the district where they were at work. Meetings of the French Canadian settlers were at once called by these fomenters of rebellion, at which Riel and his friends made inflammatory speeches and called upon the people to resist. "Why and by what right did the Hudson Bay Company sell them and their lands to the Canadian Government for £300,000? Why should not that money, or at least a large portion of it, go to them, the owners of the farms, instead?" The whole district was aflame, and the priests who had previously kept in the back-



## OUR CANADIAN MINISTERS

ground, now openly preached from their altars resistance to the Canadian Government.

A little judicious management on the part of the Ottawa Ministry might at first have settled matters amicably and have thwarted the clerical party, who from the beginning had fomented this rebellion. An authoritative and official statement that all rights of property would be absolutely respected : that all *bonâ fide* occupiers of land should retain it rent-free, and be given a legal title to it ; that all forms of religion would be respected, and all classes allowed to worship God as they pleased, would have been ample for the purpose.

But the Canadian Cabinet was then unfortunate, for the only far-seeing statesman in it, the Prime Minister, Sir John R. Macdonald, was seriously ill. Hence the management of this Red River Rebellion devolved upon Sir George Cartier, the leader of the Quebec Conservative party. I knew both these men, and I was well aware of how difficult was the game they had to play. The latter was a clever and thoroughly honest French Canadian of engaging manners, and a general favourite in all classes of society. In his youth he had himself trifled with rebellion, but had since then become a most loyal subject. He had great influence amongst his own people, whom he thoroughly understood. But, to be their leader, he had to bow down before their bigoted and ignorant priesthood, for whom in his heart he had little love and no respect. He dared not, however, run counter to their narrow, clerical views and aspirations, so his task was by no means an easy one, even for so practised a politician. A poor man, he was himself above suspicion in all money matters, but to maintain his position as a leader he had at times to resort to gross jobbery.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

The Bill he brought into the Ottawa Parliament practically conceded to the French Canadian settlers on the Red River all they could have reasonably wished for. It passed with but little opposition, though condemned as an outrageous concession to this half-breed rebellion by all the English newspapers of Ontario. Not many years before, when the Hudson Bay Company officials in the Red River territory had given offence by some action taken to enforce the law, four men had banded together and proclaimed a republic. One was proclaimed president, and two of the others were elected his ministers. For some cause unknown to me, the fourth had become objectionable to his three friends, who, wishing to get rid of him, tried and condemned him to death as a "conspirator." But he constituted in his own person the whole of the population—not in office—who recognized the three others as the rulers of their state. There was consequently no one belonging to it who could carry out the sentence, and the Republic, thus unable to enforce its decrees, fell to pieces. Riel seemed to think it necessary that he too should in like manner adopt some vigorous policy that would impress the community over which he had proclaimed himself president with a due sense of his power and of his determination to exert it against everyone who might dare to question it. He accordingly imprisoned and put in irons all the Ontario surveying party, selecting one of them, a Mr. Scott, for trial, who had made himself personally objectionable by denouncing him and his gang as rebels against the Queen's authority. A frivolous charge of breach of parole—which was unfounded—was brought against him, and he was arraigned before a mock Court-Martial of half-breeds. The proceedings were carried on in French, which Mr. Scott could not speak. He was

## SCOTT MURDERED BY RIEL'S ORDER

condemned to be shot, and in a few hours afterwards the sentence was carried out by some drunken half-breeds, who, I was told, had been addressed by a French-speaking priest on the spot and assured they were about to perform a righteous act.

The report of the rifles by which this murder was perpetrated was the death knell of the ridiculous little republic the French party had set up at Fort Garry. Throughout the whole of Canada, wherever the English language was spoken, there arose a cry of execration and a demand for the execution of the murderers.

The Ottawa Government had selected a Mr. William McDougall from amongst their own number to be the Governor of their newly-acquired Province on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. The choice was not a happy one, and was apparently made solely in the interests of party. He was a cold-blooded man, destitute of geniality and of sympathy in dealing with men.

He started for Fort Garry by the United States route which takes the traveller into British territory at the little village of Pembina, close to the 49th degree of north latitude. There he was stopped by a party of half-breeds sent by Riel to warn him not to enter the Red River territory, over which he, Riel, declared himself to be president. Mr. McDougall consequently never reached his destination nor attempted to assume the duties of the office to which he had been appointed.

The Ottawa Government was unable to withstand the loud, the angry demands for the despatch of a military expedition to suppress the rebellion in the Red River Settlement. The English-speaking people of Canada were so determined to have it put down, that had the Government

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

refused to comply, the men of Ontario would have taken the matter into their own hands and have settled it themselves. It was consequently decided to send a Brigade of troops to Fort Garry through Canadian territory as soon as the navigation on the Upper Lakes opened and the ice had disappeared from those northern regions. The Home Government agreed to co-operate by furnishing one battalion and some Royal Artillery and Royal Engineer detachments, the remaining two battalions to be provided from the excellent militia of Canada, one from Ontario, the other from the province of Quebec.

I was at the time Quartermaster-General in Canada, and was selected for the command of this expedition. I had come to know and highly value the Canadian militia, having had the advantage upon several occasions of commanding their camps of exercise. I was fully aware of the splendid material of which that force was constituted. The men are extremely handy and self-reliant; in fact, when well trained, they cannot be beaten as fighting soldiers. Their officers, accustomed in civil life to think for themselves, their minds not dwarfed or trammelled by strict rules and regulations, were men after my own heart, and for the work before us, they were certainly the best possible material. In parenthesis may I say, that if wisdom ruled our councils upon military matters—it does so but seldom—we should employ a Canadian division under their own officers in every serious war we undertake. Fortunate indeed will be the Commander-in-Chief who should have such a military force at his disposal in any war into which England may be forced.

The first Battalion of the Royal Rifles, then in Canada, was to be the Imperial quota. It was commanded by an

## THE RED RIVER FORCE

excellent soldier in every sense, Colonel Feilden, and was in all respects one of the best battalions in our army. A battalion of Ontario Militia under Colonel Jarvis, and one of Quebec Militia under Colonel Cassault, constituted the brigade, and I do not believe that any better or more workmanlike force ever took the field.

I carried four six-pounder rifle steel guns with me. Two of them I intended for the defence of my base on Thunder Bay, where I meant to leave a small garrison to protect the stores I should collect there. There had been some "tall talk" in the press at the time about the Fenians attacking my base as soon as the expeditionary force had started for Fort Garry. I never believed in the Fenians: they talked and wrote too much of their "intentions" to be taken seriously. Still, however, I thought some such precautions were necessary, and felt they would not lose in importance at the hands of those who would comment upon them in the press. These newspaper reports would make the cautious creatures who sailed under the rebel Irish flag think twice before they embarked in any such undertaking.

The remaining two of these guns I handed over to my small detachment of Royal Artillery, under the command of Lieutenant J. Alleyne, whom I had selected as the best artillery officer then in Canada. He was a good yachtsman and thoroughly understood all boat-work. Indeed he was, I may say, all round, one of the best men I have ever known in the Army. Had he lived he must have risen to the highest position.

Lieut.-General the Hon. James Lindsay—to whom I have referred in a previous chapter—was then commanding the troops in Canada. He was a wise man of the world and a soldier in every sense, highly esteemed by all ranks who had

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the advantage of knowing him well. He helped me in all possible ways when I was fitting out the expedition, and smoothed the way for me with the Canadian Government authorities, not always then the easiest of people to deal with.

The total distance to be traversed between Port Arthur and Fort Garry was over 600 miles, and the range of hills that we had to cross, and which divided the waters which drained into Hudson Bay from those that reached the sea by the St. Lawrence river, was about 800 feet in height. Everything depended upon how the force to be employed was organized and equipped before starting. After we had once embarked in our boats on Shebandowan Lake, we should be cut off absolutely from all outside help and should have to trust entirely to our own exertions and pluck. On the way to Fort Garry we could not receive reinforcements, and, worse still, could obtain no provisions, clothing, ammunition, axes or other tools. Everything we required had therefore to be taken with us in our boats, and their carrying capacity was necessarily very limited. All implements for use during the expedition had to be both strong and light. At the numerous rocky and difficult portages to be traversed, our boats would be exposed to extremely rough usage, for which they would have to be well built of good tough material. But if made extra heavy for this purpose, their great weight would add seriously to the men's labour in dragging them over the steep and rugged heights to be encountered between Lakes Superior and Winnipeg. Almost all these boats were about thirty feet long, with a proportionate beam; all had keels, and were about half and half, carvel and clinker built. The crew of each consisted of eight or nine soldiers and two or three Indians or other

## BOAT EQUIPMENT PROVIDED

civilians who were selected as being, "voyageurs," or good men on timber rafts, or at river work generally. Each boat carried sixty days' provisions for all on board of it, in the shape of salt pork, beans, preserved potatoes, flour, biscuit, salt, tea and sugar. No spirits of any sort were provided for the men, and the officers were forbidden to take any wine for their own use. It was a strictly teetotal undertaking. The necessary entrenching tools, ammunition, tents, waterproof sheets, cooking pots, blankets, etc., etc., left but little empty space in the boats, which were loaded down as far as they could be with due regard to safety. The captain of each company was responsible for all these stores, and to him were given some well-selected boat-builders' tools, a number of tin plates, and plenty of white lead for patching up holes or injuries done to the boats. All such minutiae had to be well thought out and every calculable contingency provided for.

It was essential to study the "job" as a whole, and to calculate out everything with the greatest nicety. The experience I had had in canoe-work and in the woods during my seven or eight years' service in Canada, helped me greatly, and my numerous friends in the Dominion gave me the best possible advice. The Public Works helped me in every way: one of its officers, Mr. Dawson, knew the country I was about to pass through perfectly well. Indeed, he had carefully studied the route the expedition took, and had laid out the road which connected Thunder Bay with Shebandowan Lake.

All the officers with the expeditionary force soon became expert in making portages and in mending their boats, no one more so than my very able friend and valued comrade Redvers Buller. It was here I first made his acquaintance, and I

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

am proud to feel that we have been firm friends ever since. He was a first-rate axeman, and I think he was the only man with us of any rank who could carry a 100-pound barrel of pork over a portage on his back. He could mend a boat and have her back in the water with her crew and all her stores on board whilst many, under similar circumstances, would have been still making up their minds what to do. Full of resource, and personally absolutely fearless, those serving under him always trusted him fully. He afterwards served as my Chief of the Staff in the expedition sent too late to try and relieve the hero and martyr, General Charles Gordon, in Khartoum, and no man ever deserved better of his country than he did upon that occasion.

We took nets, hoping to catch fish on the way, as the rivers and lakes to be crossed were said to be well stocked, but we never had time to use them: "Push on, push on," was our war cry, and it was in every man's mouth from first to last. Our time was limited, for the Royal Rifles had to get back to Canada before the frost set in. Besides, most of us felt we had to settle accounts quickly with Riel, who had murdered the Englishman, Mr. Scott. Had we caught him he would have had no mercy.

Upon the subject of stores one little fact may amuse my reader. At that time the pattern of our field axe was very bad. It was absolutely useless for all "tree-felling" purposes, and was so ancient in type that it might have come down to us from Saxon times. I remember how the Canadian lumbermen laughed when shown one of these prehistoric implements. I would have none of them, and purchased serviceable American axes of the double-wedge pattern instead. Since that time, this pattern has been adopted for our army generally. I must add that almost



## BADNESS OF ARMY TOOLS

all our tools and field implements were then of an inferior quality. When we tried to cut brushwood and small bushes with the regulation billhook we made little impression upon them, but they made their mark upon the billhook, whose edge, under even that easy trial, soon assumed the appearance of a dissipated saw.

This was my first independent command, so I was on my mettle, and felt that if I possessed any genius for such practical work, the time had at last arrived for me to show it. I made all the necessary calculations myself, after the most careful study of the route to be taken, of the time it would take to reach Fort Garry and to settle matters there when I had reached it. I was to leave the two battalions of Canadian militia at that place, so the return journey would be a smaller operation and the pace would consequently be much quicker. The Regular Troops upon their return journey would find every portage already cleared, and fit for immediate use.

I calculated it would take about forty days to make the journey in boats from Lake Shebandowan to Fort Garry by the route I intended to follow. The three battalions, etc., should therefore reach that place with enough provisions in hand for the battalion of the Royal Rifles and of the detachments of Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers during their return journey to Thunder Bay. The margin for mishaps was, I considered, sufficient, but not in any way extravagant. It was a matter of serious consequence that the troops returning to Canada should get over the range of mountains which formed the watershed between Lakes Superior and Winnipeg before the first severe frost had set in. Ice, even a quarter of an inch thick, upon any of the many lakes to be traversed would have cut through

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the thin sides of my boats. Yet I dared not make them thicker, as every extra pound added to their weight, and consequently to the work of hauling them over the numerous portages to be crossed. Many of these portages were long, and a still greater number were very steep. But for the return journey the boats would be much lighter, and consequently the rate of progress would be quicker.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

The Lakes, Rivers and Wilderness to be traversed,  
1870

THE country we were about to pass through was then only known to those employed by the Hudson Bay Company. Their chief posts in it were at Fort William, where the Kaministiquia River falls into Thunder Bay, at Fort Francis—about half way by water to Fort Garry—and at Rat Portage, where the Winnipeg River leaves the north end of the Lake of the Woods. As a general rule the Company sent its annual supply of stores, for that district, by ship to Hudson's Bay, whence they were carried by boat up the St. John's River to Lake Winnipeg.

My orders were to proceed to Thunder Bay, on the western shores of Lake Superior, and to make my way thence in boats to the Red River Settlement. Starting from Toronto, the beautiful capital of the magnificent province of Ontario, our route was first north by rail for ninety-four miles to Collingwood, the railway terminus on Georgian Bay. From that port, steamers conveyed us across Lake Huron and through the St. Mary River into Lake Superior and over it to Thunder Bay, a total distance of 534 miles. Thence to Fort Garry was 660 miles. The first bit of that distance was along a partly made road of forty-eight miles to Lake Shebandowan, from which lake the remainder of the journey was to be by water.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

The Lake Superior basin sends its waters eastward over Niagara down the valley of the St. Lawrence into the sea below Quebec, whilst the Lake Winnipeg basin is drained by the St. John's River that runs northward into Hudson's Bay. A range of rugged and, in 1870, little explored mountains runs fairly parallel with the northern shores of Lake Superior, and circling round its western limits restricts the basin very much on that side. As it bends southwards, round Thunder Bay, at a mean distance from it of about eighty miles, this range diminishes in height and importance. Still, however, the lowest pass over it in that region is about 839 feet above the lake, and through that pass I was to take my Expeditionary Force.

During the two preceding years the Canadian Government had made feeble and intermittent efforts to open out a route from Thunder Bay to Fort Garry. Working parties had been at times fitfully engaged in the construction of a road from that bay to the Shebandowan Lake. That beautiful sheet of water—about twenty miles in length and a few miles in width—is over 800 feet above the level of Lake Superior. Thence by lake and rivers to the Lake of the Woods, the distance was about 310 miles, there being about seventeen portages to be made and crossed along it. I may explain that a "portage" means a break in the chain of water communication over which all canoes and boats have to be hauled or carried, as I shall describe further on, and all food, stores, etc., transported by the soldiers on their backs. Some of the portages we crossed were over a mile in length.

The Lake of the Woods was of considerable length, and the passage over it was sure to be very tedious, as we had no useful maps of that district. Owing to the intricate maze formed by its seeming infinity of islands, and of promontories

## THE CHIPPEWAHS

resembling islands, many a boat's crew, after hours of rowing, would often find themselves in some *cul de sac*. Much time would thus be lost and the temper of all employed would certainly be severely tried.

The Winnipeg River had a bad reputation amongst voyagers as very dangerous and difficult. There were at least thirty portages on it, several of which were terrifying to look at. I have seen many rivers in many countries, but for the exquisite beauty of foaming, raging water in great volume amidst such extremely wild and beautiful scenery as it passes through for about 150 miles, I know of nothing to equal it. The Chippewahs, to whom it may be said the district between Lake Superior and the prairie belongs, have been for the last century a peaceful, lazy and uninteresting race. They keep to the forests along the rivers and lakes, and are seldom to be seen in the prairie country. Good men in canoes, they show to the best advantage on difficult rivers. They live largely on fish, but obtain a small amount of flour at the Hudson Bay posts in exchange for mink and other skins. In summer they move to where the blueberry abounds, with which they cram themselves for a month, and upon many islands in the Lake of the Woods I found small patches where they had planted potatoes. I was told they also plant a little Indian corn.

I have thus endeavoured to convey briefly to my reader a rough outline of the route we were to follow and of the obstacles to be faced by all ranks destined to take part in this expedition, for all alike had to do much manual work. I have avoided unnecessary detail as far as is consistent with affording some general information as to the difficulties of the route, giving a fair idea of the preparations made beforehand to meet and

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

overcome them. When I now recall the events connected with this undertaking, and how much I had to demand from all ranks in the force employed in order to accomplish the task we had confided to us, I am not surprised that the home Government paused and rather shied at the proposal that any Imperial troops should take part in it. Truly it was a peculiar undertaking, and any serious mistake on the part of the Commander during its progress might, and probably would, have entailed disaster.

Lake Superior is usually sufficiently clear of ice for navigation purposes by the second week of May, and as part of the force intended for Fort Garry was to return to Canada by the same route, it was essential that the expedition should start at the earliest possible date. Steamers from Collingwood can only reach Lake Superior by the St. Mary River, the dividing boundary throughout its whole length of fifty miles, between Canada and the United States. There is a bad rapid, unnavigable by steamers, on this river, known as "The Sault St. Mary." To avoid it the Americans had constructed a canal three miles in length, on their side of the river, so that all our steamers bound for Lake Superior would have to pass for that distance through United States territory, as we had then no canal on our side of the river.

The Fenians thought they saw in this Red River Expedition an opportunity of stirring up enmity between England and the United States. Our troops would have to pass close to the ill-defined frontier that divides our territory from that of the States, and it might perhaps be possible to raise the cry that we had violated our neighbour's boundaries.

The Irish question has always been a thorn in the flesh of every President and Government at Washington. But the Irish vote was, and I fear must long be, a matter of great

## FENIAN HOPES AND PROJECTS

importance to the wirepullers of both the political parties in the States. At the time I write of, the leaders of neither party dared offend so powerful an organization, that voted "solid" according to the orders of their chiefs.

These Fenian projects met with great sympathy from the press of the Western States, which urged the desirability of hindering in every possible way the arrival of our troops at Fort Garry. These facts were well known to the Governor-General of Canada and were communicated to me. It was therefore thought advisable to send an ordinary steamer, with merchandize only on board, through the Sault St. Mary Canal into Lake Superior as soon as the ice had sufficiently cleared off to admit of this being done. Even one steamer on that lake would render us fairly independent of the canal should the United States Government positively forbid its use to us.

When our merchant steamer appeared at the lower end of the canal, the officials on the spot were taken by surprise, and having received no orders from their Government on the subject, allowed her to pass through. Once through it, and its length is only three miles, the steamer was in British waters, as the St. Mary River is there the common property of both nations. It was deemed advisable—in case of accidents—to have at least two steamers on Lake Superior for the use of our expeditionary force. But the Canadian steamer that next sought to pass through this canal was refused permission, although she had no war material of any kind on board. We fortunately found an American steamer with an American captain who hired himself and his vessel to us for work upon Lake Superior for that season. Entirely of his own accord he made an affidavit before the United States authorities, that she had not been hired by the British, and

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

that he had nothing whatever to do with the Red River Expedition. By this hard swearing he got safely through into Lake Superior. We were thus provided with two steamers for use on its waters.

We had never contemplated sending troops through this canal. Our intention was to land them below the "Sault," on our side of the St. Mary River, and to march them three miles to the head of the canal to re-embark in the same steamer, which we hoped would be allowed to go through the canal provided it had no inculpatory war material on board. We had allowed the United States Government to send vessels with war material on board, and even in one instance had granted permission to one of their gun-boats to pass through our St. Lawrence River canals during the progress of their Confederate War. We had consequently hoped the Washington Government would show us equal consideration in the matter of this St. Mary River canal, as long as we did not send armed men through their territory. But we reckoned without our host, and at first the answer we received was an official notification that no other British ships, whatever might be their cargo, would be allowed, until further orders, to pass through this canal.

When these matters were reported to Lord Lisgar, then our Governor-General in Canada, he sent a formal protest to the United States Government at Washington on the subject, which resulted in the canal being thrown open to all our ships not carrying munitions of war. But all these proceedings on the part of the American authorities delayed us. Short of going to war they could not have stopped the expedition, do what they might, so the line they took was very foolish. They gained nothing by it, whilst they annoyed us much to no useful purpose.



## PRINCE ARTHUR'S LANDING

In Thunder Bay we steered for a small clearance that had been made by the Canadian Public Works Department as the starting point for the road to Shebandowan. There I landed and formed a camp for my brigade. I named the place "Prince Arthur's Landing," after the Duke of Connaught, who as Prince Arthur had recently spent a winter with his regiment in Montreal.

A few shanties had been erected before our arrival as storehouses, but it was an ugly looking spot, for everything, including the ground and the trees, had recently been burnt black by a great forest fire. The conflagration had spread inland, destroying bridges, culverts, shanties, and every blade of grass along the new road. Nothing remained anywhere but tall blackened gaunt trunks of trees and smoke-disfigured rocks. I never looked upon a drearier or less inviting prospect in any of my many wanderings.

I landed on May 25, 1870, and pitched my tent on the ground overlooking the bay. The lake beyond it is so large, that it may well be called an inland fresh-water sea. The shores, rich in minerals, are in many parts very beautiful, though still but little known to English tourists. Our camps were laid out with as great regularity as the broken nature of the ground would admit. Never have men worked harder than those who landed with me there. The stores, food, ammunition, etc., etc., had to be landed and carried to the places prepared for their reception ; paths had to be made, a strong redoubt to be constructed for the defence of the reserve of food, etc., etc., I meant to leave there ; large parties were required daily along the Shebandowan road, which was still a very poor highway for my heavily laden wagons. Before leaving Montreal, I had been assured by the Canadian Government that this road would

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

be open for traffic by the end of May, but not more than thirty of the forty-eight miles to which it extended had been completed by that date, and for many miles the forest was still uncut along the route selected.

This threw so much heavy and unexpected work upon my soldiers that I thought it advisable to have the Kaministiquia River explored, as it ran out of Lake Shebandowan into Lake Superior. We had been told that its rapids and its falls were of so terrible a nature that it was absolutely hopeless to think of navigating it in any way. One fall was known to be over 120 feet in height. I sent a company of the Royal Rifles to explore it, whose captain was one of the very hardest campaigners I ever knew. I went there to examine it and found myself in Hiawatha's romantically beautiful country. The scenery was very grand and striking, but the river was certainly no first class highway. However it was a help, and relieved the great pressure upon the still partly unfinished road to Shebandowan.

I shall not attempt to enter into any particulars of the many appliances we used for carrying our impedimenta over the portages, but it was wonderful how quickly the little Londoners of the Royal Rifles became good men in the boats and on the portages also. By the time they had made the trip to Fort Garry and back to Lake Superior, both officers and men of that corps had become good, many of them expert axemen, and all more or less skilled in the craft of the voyageur. All ranks in the two Canadian battalions became proficient in the work more quickly, but indeed, where every man worked as if the success of the expedition depended solely upon his individual exertion and skill, it is difficult and it would be invidious, to draw any comparison in this respect between the three battalions employed.

## WE SPLIT ROCKS AS HANNIBAL DID

I had to send forward Companies to complete the road to Shebandowan. The men worked at it through the month of June and half of July as if the Old Gentleman himself were driving them forward ; all felt that the sooner it was finished the sooner would they be able to make their final start for the Red River. Many of us in youth have in our ignorance ridiculed Livy's story of how Hannibal split the rocks which hindered the passage of his army by first lighting great fires on and around them, and when they had been thus made extremely hot sousing them suddenly with cold wine. I found that a similar process was commonly employed by roadmaking parties in the wild parts of Canada, and that this method was most efficacious. There was always ample material at hand in the way of firewood, and water was found to answer the purpose quite as effectually as wine. I am sure that none of my men would have wasted good liquor in the construction of roads, as the great Carthaginian is said to have done when crossing the Alps ! A considerable amount of " corderoy " work was here and there necessary, and there were many bridges, varying much in size, to be constructed. On all sides the work was very heavy and incessant and the heat considerable. The mosquitoes, sand-flies and black-flies drew blood freely and rendered sleep difficult ; I had provided each man with a veil, but after a little while it was difficult to make them use it. It came in handy, however, later on for straining the Lake of the Woods water, which was densely loaded with vegetable matter. Many Canadian prophets of evil—opposed to the undertaking—had tried to frighten me with "traveller's yarns" of the torture we should suffer from these pests. They were, I confess, a great source of worry and annoyance, but my men made light of them. Besides the veils, I had

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

also supplied each boat with a can of "mosquito oil," such as I had found efficacious when salmon fishing on the Canadian rivers. But the men scorned it for that purpose, though they were glad to use it in their lamps later on. Fortunately it was not an explosive compound.

Whilst every one was hard at work as long as daylight lasted in preparing for our embarkation, a deputation arrived from the once great tribe of the Chippewahs or Ojibewahs—for Fame spells their names both ways—to ask me for what purpose I had come to their country and why I was making a road through it without having first come to terms with them, and so on. The orator of the party, whose title was "Blackstone," had travelled in a cart the last few miles of his journey to meet me, a mode of conveyance he had never tried before. The feeling of importance this novel position conferred upon him was, however, mingled with terror, as all Wood Indians have an instinctive dread of horses. Before entering the camp he stopped at a little stream to make his toilet. With a small piece of wet soap he plastered his black locks into long straight tails, then tied a mink skin round them, into which at the back of his head he stuck some eagle's feathers and fastened some ermine tails all around. His party consisted of a squaw, three men and two boys, all of whom were formally introduced into my presence. It is not always easy to look strictly solemn, though no Indian will ever even smile upon such occasions. He made a long speech with all the manner of a well-bred English gentleman and with much impressive gesticulation. The gist of what he said lay in the question of how much I meant to pay him and his immediate tribe as compensation for our invasion of his hereditary hunting grounds. It was a very natural question, for I could not but

## THE INDIANS' GREAT MOTHER

feel that what we in our superior wisdom were pleased to describe as opening up the district meant to him and his people the eventual destruction of all the fur-bearing animals by the trapping and selling of which these Indians and their forebears had supported themselves and their families for generations. They expressed themselves as devotedly loyal to the "Great Mother," meaning the Queen, and as anxious to help us in all possible ways. I told them we were so busy at the moment that I could not attend to those matters, but that an officer at Fort Francis would be deputed to arrange them with him at that station. We parted on good terms, and the Chief was kind enough to say that in the meantime he hoped we should freely use all the wood and water we might require along our line of route. I ordered the Chief and each man of his party to be supplied with a suit of clothes : one and all selected a frock coat of the finest cloth, such being the garment dearest to all these poor simple fellows, although the least suited to their daily mode of life. In the course of my North American wanderings I have never encountered any Indian tribes without experiencing a feeling of remorse not only for having robbed them of their hunting grounds, but still more for killing them off with the fatal poison of whiskey.

Most of our boats required repairs by the time they had reached Shebandowan. To drag them up the roaring rapids and over the sharp rocks of the Kaministiquia River until they had reached this lake, 800 feet above the level of the waters they started from, was a stupendous task for the men and a serious trial to the boats. I had to establish a sort of dockyard on that lake where all were overhauled, duly mended, and fitted with oars, masts and sails. There I also re-coopered our barrels of pork, filling up with brine

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

those that had leaked during the very rough hauling they had encountered in this first section of the journey.

Mr. Dawson, an able and hardworking public servant, who had been the pioneer of the route we followed from Thunder Bay to the Lake of the Woods, did all in his power to help forward the expedition. I often pitied him, for his work was constant and the assistants sent to him by the Minister responsible for the department in the Canadian Cabinet were only too often drunkards or incapables; they mostly belonged, in fact, to the class well known in America as "loafers," who, when a liquor bar is handy, spend most of their time there. In this case some were the ne'er-do-weel friends of politicians then in office. Upon one occasion I met one of these "loafers" at a roadside station. When asked the nature of his occupation he said, without hesitation, that he had none in particular, his uncle had merely given him this billet in order that he might be taken at Government expense to Manitoba, where he had a brother whom he wanted to join.

We had experienced many very heavy thunderstorms whilst encamped at Prince Arthur's landing. There is much hematite iron in that neighbourhood, and I often wondered if its presence exercised any magnetic attraction over the electricity with which the heavens in that region seem to be specially charged. But during the night of July 15, when encamped at Shebandowan, we had a thunderstorm to which all the others—and we had had several—were merely boys' crackers compared with the firing of a monster gun. Whilst it lasted the heavens seemed at times to open and let fall great crushing weights of explosives upon the earth beneath, which apparently trembled at the shock. Then followed a rain the like of which I have never seen even in the Tropics. It

## A STORM WITH RAIN AND THUNDER

fell upon us, not in drops but literally as sheets of water in rapid succession. It suddenly began to fall and ended as abruptly. I had, a considerable time back, named the following day, July 16, for the final start of our expedition for Fort Garry. As is usually the case in such matters, when the day drew near my calculations seemed to have been all wrong, and few thought I could carry out the announcement I had made. I rejoiced much when this fearful storm overtook us that it had not come a day later. It was the thought uppermost in my mind as I heard the deafening peals of thunder and the splash of the, to me, unprecedented fall of rain which followed. To my extreme joy, day broke the following morning with all the promise of fine weather. A bright sun gladdened all, and soon dried the clothes of those who had suffered most during the rainstorm of the previous evening. Looking back to the trying events of our many wet and dreary bivouacs, where sleep came only in snatches, the misery of such nights is almost swallowed up and forgotten in my recollection of the exquisite joy which the bright sunny morning, that usually followed, shed on all of us. Even the poor devil who had had to pass the night on a muddy bed as best he could without his great-coat, soon smiled all over as the rays of a genial sun began to warm him. When all around us is thus brightened, generous hope once more resumes her sway and blots out the remembrance of recent misery. A strong westerly wind, however, set in with the first rays of daylight, and although it dried our clothes, it raised a big sea which broke violently in a heavy surf upon the sandy beach of McNeil's Bay. Whilst it lasted, all embarkations had to be suspended. It did not begin to abate until the sun had sunk near the horizon, but as soon as the boats already

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

launched could be safely brought alongside the bank to be loaded, the first embarkation began. It was late before the order to start was given to the first detachment, which consisted of two companies of the Royal Rifles, a party of Royal Artillery with two 7-pounder rifle guns, and another of Royal Engineers, all under the command of that excellent soldier, Colonel Feilden, of the Royal Rifles.

It was an exciting moment when we wished them "God-speed" with all our heart, and watched them pull away from that beach of gold-coloured sand, which still shone in all the bright glories of a setting sun. They quickly disappeared into the evening mist just then beginning to rise from the lake. I fully understood the great natural difficulties they would meet with and would have to overcome. But I was equally certain that if determined courage, strengthened by the best and highest military discipline, could possibly overcome all such obstacles, Colonel Feilden and his men would do it. The wind had died away, as it usually does there towards evening. The weather was delightful, the lake so lately stormy, was in its best and most placid beauty, reflecting on its mirror-like surface the beach and other trees on the high ground around it. For the moment all was still and quiet. The day's work was over. Strange to say, no hum of insect or chirp of bird ever comes from these northern parts of the Canadian forests, and there were no swallows to skim over the lake below and lend life to its great expanse of water.

The whole scene, with its picturesque military accessories, was for many reasons very impressive. It brought to my mind the stories read in boyhood of how wild bands of fierce Norse freebooters set out from some secluded bay in quest of plunder and adventure.

One great peculiarity of our undertaking struck me forcibly



## POLITICIANS TRY TO FRIGHTEN US

at the time : that in an age, justly celebrated for its inventions and scientific progress, such a military expedition should start unaided in any fashion by either the steam engine or the electric telegraph. We were to depend exclusively upon sail and oar to reach our far-off destination, just as the Greeks and Romans had been forced to do in their foreign campaigns some twenty centuries before. Another curious fact was, that upon reaching our destination we should be as far from a telegraph station as Caesar was from Rome when he jumped ashore in Kent with his legions a little before the Christian era.

Several of the French-speaking politicians and their bigoted priests wished us to fail. The newspapers they influenced were anxious to frighten us with fanciful accounts of the great physical obstacles that lay in our path. They dwelt upon the courage of the half-breed enemy, who, it was said, sought to lure us on to the destruction that certainly awaited us. Possibly these stories may have helped to sell the newspapers in which they appeared : they certainly amused the brave men it was then my good fortune to command. Had the silly people who thus hoped to frighten us understood the British and Canadian soldiers under my command, they would have realized that their one dread was lest Riel should bolt without fighting when we neared Fort Garry. When news came from that station that he and the other murderers, his councillors, "meant business," joy ran freely through all ranks.

Between June 1 and when our leading companies started from Lake Shebandowan, July 16, it had rained upon twenty-three days, which was somewhat trying in the midst of our preparations. But the fact that those companies did start upon the day I had long before named for their departure

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

made glad the hearts of loyal men in Canada, and was taken as a good omen by all ranks of the Red River force.

As this leading detachment pushed out from shore and dipped their oars for the first time in the lake before them, they raised the shout, "For Fort Garry," and as it echoed round those beautiful shores all ranks for the first time, I think, appreciated the reality of the operation before them.

When the last detachment embarked on August 2, this little well-formed brigade covered a distance of 150 miles from front to rear. A rather long column! I do not believe there were ever harder or handier soldiers in every way than those who constituted it. They were all carefully picked and had already become well seasoned by many weeks of heavy work. Their wants had been carefully attended to: all were well fed and had lived in the open air for the last seven or eight weeks. With such men all things are possible. It is not, therefore, to be wondered at that I laughed at the many warnings of impending misfortunes that "the well-informed" hurled at me. I was assured that my column should be three times as strong as it was: that Riel and his ferocious half-breeds would destroy it on some carefully selected portage. In fact, we were warned that the fate of General Braddock and his troops awaited us. I doubt whether any British force ever began so serious an undertaking under blacker prophecies of impending disaster, which in some instances seemed meant as threats. It was stoutly affirmed that we should be devoured by mosquitoes and other venomous flies, which drove even the Indians from the woods in July, where the heat was then stifling: that the Chippewahs would compel us to pay large sums for going through their country, that the passage by their rivers could only be made in birch-bark canoes manned by skilled Indians.

## THE WORK IN CROSSING A PORTAGE

It seemed to me that what annoyed those angry monitors most was not that their advice was not followed, but that they were not invited either "*to boss the show*" or even to take any part whatever in its plans or proceedings. When it was first talked of, they scoffed at the proposal that any British or Militia battalions should be sent in great boats over rivers where none but Indians and the most practised voyageurs had previously dared to venture. They said we had all gone mad, and that I was the greatest lunatic of the lot : that I might be a good soldier, but I was an idiot upon all matters connected with canoes and river work. The fact that I had been six or seven years in Canada, and had been a good deal in the woods, was ignored. In fine, we were looked upon as men whom the gods having doomed to destruction had first made mad.

I may here conveniently describe the crossing of a portage by a company. It was the same process in all instances, the only difference being in the length of the portage. Some were not more than one or two hundred yards in length, whilst a few were over a mile. The relative difficulties of portages—all other things being equal—are in direct ratio to the square of their length. From the description which I give of this one operation, the reader will learn the story of all, as the work at each portage was alike in character ; the one exception being that made by the leading company which had imposed upon it the opening out of all the portages and the cutting down and laying the rollers along them. The poplar of about six or eight inches in diameter made the best rollers, as the boats could be hauled most easily over their soft and juicy bark. As a rule when each company reached a portage the company immediately in front had not yet quite cleared away from it. But until all the stores

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

of the company in possession of the portage had been taken across, the newly arrived company was not allowed to begin discharging provisions, etc., etc. This rule was necessary in order to avoid mixing the stores of the two companies. The labour of hauling across our boats and of carrying the sacks and barrels of provisions, all ammunition and stores contained in each was very great. Some of the portages were very rocky, others excessively steep, and some of considerable height and very long. As soon as each boat was launched into the smooth water above or below the portage, as the case might be, its crew reloaded it, and when all was ready the men embarked and pulled off a little to make room for the next boat on the portage. When all the boats had been taken across and reloaded, the captain's boat pulled away for the next portage, his other boats following as near together as possible. The boats of each company kept together throughout, so each company was the small integer of the expeditionary force. I usually travelled a little ahead with the best guide and "blazed" the remarkable trees as I went along to mark the direction that should be taken by all behind to lead them to the next portage. It was astonishing to see how handy at all boatwork our men soon became.

## CHAPTER XL

### Hear of the Emperor Louis Napoleon's Downfall

EVERY boat carried a bell-tent for the use of those in it. But tents were seldom pitched, as we worked daily until sunset, when we landed to cook our evening meal, and when it was eaten the time had come for sleep until we resumed the oar next morning at daybreak. I cannot remember having slept in a tent during the journey except for the two nights I spent at Fort Francis and the night before we occupied Fort Garry. During our long journey I was asleep one night upon a short portage. It was pitch dark, for the rain poured in torrents. I was very wet, and as I dozed with the rain splashing in my face I heard the sound of a paddle in the water close by. I jumped up, feeling certain it was my weekly post canoe, and so it was. A lanthorn was lit by my good friend and A.D.C., young Fred Denison, of the Governor-General's bodyguard, who was soon busily employed in opening the sealed letter-bag. The latest telegram contained the startling news that the French army had been destroyed or taken prisoners at Sedan, and that the Emperor Louis Napoleon had surrendered and was a prisoner in the German camp. I translated the telegram into French for the voyageurs about me, but they refused to believe it. They could not realize that the land of their proudest and most cherished traditions

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

could be thus humbled in the dust and struck down from the high position it had previously held amongst nations. They had been brought up in the faith that the French were the greatest people in Europe. Their honest, if sentimental, love for "La Belle France" was most touching, and raised them much in my esteem. Well, indeed, might some modern psalmist who had witnessed that curious scene in the wilds of the Canadian forest have recorded how those brave and feeling voyageurs, as they laid themselves down that night, wept as they thought of the former greatness of the land of their forefathers and realized its then fallen and forlorn state.

Before leaving Montreal for Lake Superior, I received this telegram from home. "Remember Butler, 69th Regiment." I had made that officer's acquaintance when his battalion was quartered at Montreal in the following way. Every summer some half-dozen regimental officers were employed on a military survey of the frontier between Canada and the United States. With a view to obtain good men for this special service a general order was published each year, that officers wishing to be so employed should send me specimens of their military sketches. Amongst the applicants in 1868 was Lieutenant, now General, Sir William Butler. When he came to see me on this business, I was much struck with the bright clearness of his intelligence and with his all-round intellectual superiority to the general run of our officers. I inquired about him from those who knew him well, and ascertained that he was not only by far the cleverest man in his battalion, but was well known generally for his energy and varied talents. Unable to employ him on this survey, I made a note of his name in case I should ever require the services of an officer who was

## SIR WILLIAM BUTLER

evidently a good active talented and trustworthy man. I had long been in the habit of keeping a list of the best and ablest soldiers I knew, and was always on the look-out for those who could safely be entrusted with any special military piece of work. Butler struck me as being just such a man, so his name had been duly recorded upon it. This telegram did not therefore come from one of whom I knew nothing. When on my way to Thunder Bay he overtook me at Toronto. Up to that time the only information we had received from the Red River territory had come from unreliable sources. It came either from disloyal French-speaking priests, who had their own objects to serve, or from Hudson Bay officials, who wrote in terror of their lives, and in a trading sense only, and lastly from the over-awed loyal minority, who feared to speak their minds openly, dreading the consequences of any bold expression of opinion. Lieutenant Butler was just the man I wanted to go round through the United States to the Red River for the purpose of finding out how matters really stood there, and then to come and meet me when I had made about half the distance to Fort Garry. At Toronto I gave him a brief outline of my plans, and told him the date I calculated upon for reaching Fort Francis at the mouth of the Red River, where it falls into Lake Winnipeg, and lastly, the day upon which I hoped to arrive at Fort Garry. I explained that I wanted an able soldier, whom I could trust implicitly, to go *viâ* the United States to the Red River Settlement to judge for himself as to the condition of affairs there. I said I required information as to what this half-breed rising meant? Who were at the bottom of it? Was Riel a puppet in the hands of others, and what were the grievances—if any—of those with whom he acted? and so forth. Knowing the time of

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

my probable arrival, he was to meet me in the neighbourhood of Fort Francis upon the date I told him I hoped to reach it.

This roving commission, that required so many rare qualities, was one after his own heart, and he was just the man to carry it out admirably. We parted at Toronto, both bound for the same destination but by different routes. He carried out his instructions in the most satisfactory way, and met me in the middle of the great wild forest at the place and upon the date I had arranged with him. What a comfort it is to have able and determined men to deal with ! But it is not easy to find men of Sir William Butler's genius. They are not available at every season, nor do they grow on every bush. Since then we have been comrades in many expeditions, and I am proud to reckon him amongst my best and most loyal friends. In genius and in inventive power, as it can be employed in all the various phases of war, he is second to none of the able soldiers who have been my friends and associates throughout a long and varied military career. Even amongst them, his great imaginative faculty—that quality so rare, so much above the other gifts, required for excellence in military leaders—marked him out pre-eminently. It is to the apparent want of that uncommon gift on the part of commanders, more than to any lack of numbers or of guns or of horses, that we must often look for the inordinate prolongation of our wars. It is imagination, educated by practical experience in war, that enables the commander to foresee what his enemy will do under the circumstances which any change of policy may rapidly develop, so that he, the commander, may be ready promptly and effectively to checkmate him.

Before starting for Thunder Bay I had sent a proclamation to Fort Garry addressed to the inhabitants of the adjoining



## MESSAGE TO PROTESTANT BISHOP

settlement telling them the objects of my expedition, and calling upon all loyal subjects of Queen Victoria to assist me in their accomplishment. I sent a covering letter with the copy forwarded to the Hudson Bay Company's officer at Fort Garry, in which I begged he would do his utmost to finish with all speed the road which some time before had been begun from the north-west angle of the Lake of the Woods to his station. I had no intention of using it, but I wished Riel to believe that I meant to do so, in order that he might look for me in that locality and not by the Winnipeg River and Fort Alexander route which I had settled in my own mind to follow. This ruse had the desired effect, for I learnt at Fort Francis that he had sent a party of half-breeds to a spot near where that road reached the Lake of the Woods.

Before leaving Prince Arthur's Landing, I had despatched a loyal and trustworthy half-breed to the Red River Settlement viâ that unfinished road. His orders were to meet me at Fort Francis on July 31 with the latest news of the rebel doings. He carried out this dangerous mission most successfully, and met me as arranged. He had left his home near the Lower Fort on the Red River on July 20, bringing me letters from our Protestant Bishop there with valuable information as to supplies and as to the rebel proceedings. He said every one in the settlement lived in a state of abject dread. The English and French mutually distrusted each other, and both feared the Indians, whose loyalty had been shaken by Riel's conduct. But all the messages I received ended with the same earnest appeal that I should push on as quickly as possible, for no one could say what a day might bring forth.

Under the influence of the French party in Parliament

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the Canadian Government had recently passed a Bill which practically conceded all the half-breeds in the Red River had demanded. This Bill was settled with the French Bishop from Fort Garry, who had gone to Ottawa for that purpose.

He strove his utmost to obtain an indemnity for his friend Riel that would have screened him from all punishment for his rebellion, for having robbed the loyal party on the Red River, and for his cruel and deliberate murder of Mr. Scott. This scheming prelate had assured Riel that if he would be guided by him—the Bishop—he need have no fear of punishment for his crimes, as his influence at Ottawa was so powerful that he would certainly be able to secure him from all legal prosecutions. But he failed to accomplish this part of his scheme, and was consequently much alarmed lest his friend, Riel the murderer, should upset the project by some attempt at resistance.

The important news I received at Fort Francis from Lieutenant William Butler was that Riel was in a perplexed state of mind, not knowing how far he could trust his intriguing Bishop. When his fear of the scaffold was somewhat allayed by the promised amnesty, he talked very big of coming out to welcome me to the Red River, and hand over to me the government of the country. His hesitation at this moment lost him the goodwill and support of many a French half-breed and would-be rebel. But he still talked big at times, and he published proclamations in his own name as if he were the undisputed ruler of the territory.

At Fort Francis I learned, as I had expected, that there was no possibility of my being able to use the road between the north-west corner of the Lake of the Woods and Fort Garry. I had therefore no other resource but to continue my advance by water, I should consequently have to face the much

## THE BEAUTIFUL LAKE OF THE WOODS

feared rapids of the Winnipeg River, which connects the great lake of that name with the Lake of the Woods. This was the most dangerous part of our journey, and which I most dreaded.

In crossing the Lake of the Woods we came in for stormy weather, and the waves were high at times, when white horses broke into drifting spray. It is much crowded with islands, and as no good map had ever been made of it many of our companies lost their way. My boat, as usual, was some distance in front, and I went astray several times in long reaches from which there was no outlet but that by which I had entered them. This was very annoying, and the romantic scenery of trees and rocks, of earth and water, in all their varied and picturesque combinations, did not soothe my annoyance at the delays thus occasioned. And yet as I now think of those brightly beautiful and wooded inlets, of their great stretches of yellow sand, of their many steep and pink-tinted cliffs and lichen-covered rocks, often pictured as it were in a looking glass upon the lake below, I long at times to revisit those beautiful scenes ; to lie upon their deep, tufted moss and think of an eventful life, and dream of the might have been.

When I passed there silence reigned supreme. The dip of the paddle at regular intervals and the occasional weird whistle of the loon were the only sounds we heard. There, indeed, at that time, the man wearied of life's mockeries might revel in the exquisite sensation of being alone and far away from the noisy and vulgar whirl of civilization.

The great water-basin of which this Lake of the Woods is an important feature, drains into Lake Winnipeg by the splendid river of that name. That river bursts from the former lake by several rocky channels, and rushing and

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

roaring as it tumbles into a great seething basin below, re-unites there. These channels form several small but extremely picturesque little islands, upon one of which stands the Hudson Bay Post of Rat Portage. It consists of a few log houses surrounded by high wooden palisades. It is a sweet spot amidst the spray and roaring noise of the mighty river rushing by it.

What a strange and lonely existence is led by the few white men at these isolated posts ! Most of them were of North British origin, a large proportion coming from the Orkney Islands. Honest, hard-working men inured from childhood to a rough mode of life, they made excellent servants for the Hudson Bay Company in their distant possessions. The best come to the top and become eventually leading men in the Company's business, many growing rich, some of them extremely wealthy. The gentleman in charge at Rat Portage was a half-breed married to a squaw and had been there for thirteen years. He was well educated, had read much, and could talk pleasantly of what he knew.

I took a great interest in the Company's affairs at that time, and during my short halt under his hospitable roof I learnt much regarding their dealings with the Indians. No promise made to them is ever broken in the smallest particular, a fact which I hope may have taught them a good lesson, and which had certainly enabled the Company to trade successfully with them for the last two centuries. Each post was a little centre of Christianity, and although no attempt at proselytism was made, the Gospel virtues of truth and honest dealing between man and man were taught by example. I invariably looked over the books possessed by those in charge of these posts. There was always a Bible, a Shakespeare and a few of Sir Walter Scott's novels.

## THE INDIANS VERY CONSERVATIVE

But, oh ! how dreary must have been their winters, cut off from all communication with civilization, and with very little to occupy either mind or body.

It was curious to examine the articles sent to such posts for barter with the Indians. The latter are very conservative by instinct. If they have become accustomed to an article of a certain size, shape or colour, these sons of Hiawatha will buy no other. For many generations they had bought long swallow-tailed coats of fine blue cloth with brass buttons, and would not look at any other pattern. In this neighbourhood there was practically no game, so the Indians lived upon fish. Sturgeon in great quantity abounded in the Lake of the Woods, and was excellent eating.

The country we had passed through between Thunder Bay and Fort Francis was a wild rocky desert, but covered wherever the pine can grow with poor stunted trees. There was very little soil anywhere, seldom enough to hold a tent-peg, but I was never in any country that supplied the traveller with a more comfortable bivouac. With a blanket wrapped round the body, it was easy to sleep soundly on the deep, soft, and springy moss that abounded everywhere. It was indeed a rare thing to see a tent pitched on any portage between Thunder Bay and Fort Garry. At the former place we had come in for a rich crop of wild raspberries, and during our subsequent journey the blueberries made a good dessert to the Company's mess of salt pork and biscuit.

During the journey to Fort Francis we seldom had a favourable wind, and had consequently to depend entirely upon our oars. The easterly breeze that would have helped us on many a lake and river would, however, have brought

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

more rain, of which we already had an ample supply. Though we had very wet bivouacs we always had good fires, for there was plenty of wood to burn everywhere, and the soldier knows what that means to him when in the field. Our daily routine was: "Reveill  " at the first streak of daylight, often before it. This was always followed by the shout of "Fort Garry," the shibboleth of our expedition. If any tents had been pitched they were struck at once, and stowed away in the boats. All hands were soon hard at work with their oars, and this continued until about 8 a.m., when there was an hour's halt for breakfast. At 1 p.m. we halted for another hour for dinner, and about 6 or 7 p.m. the day's work came to an end. In about a week all became expert in the art of making a good fire and in cooking rapidly. It was surprising how quickly our soldiers became handy at all kinds of forest work. But their appearance would have horrified any home service Adjutant. Their clothes generally were much torn, and some were very ragged from the loads all ranks carried on their backs; the seats of their trousers were in a disastrous condition, the best of them being patched with the rough sacking of the empty biscuit sacks, and the hands, arms, faces and necks of men and officers were as brown as those of the darkest coloured Ojibbewah. When bathing all ranks presented a magpie appearance, with head, neck and hands nearly black, in marked contrast with the white skin of their bodies.

No one ever fell sick. I was asked to have our senior doctor promoted when the expedition came to an end, but refused, because he had had nothing to do, there never having been any sick for him to cure.

How can I do justice to the cheery pluck, endurance and good humour of the rank and file of that brigade? They

## THE BRITISH AND COLONIAL OFFICER

had had much to bear with during the journey, but the greatest disappointment was that of having had no fight at the end of it. They bore it with resignation, but it was a galling disappointment, for all ranks were keenly anxious to pitch into those cruel half-breed rebels, and longed to hang Riel on the spot where he had murdered the unoffending Mr. Scott.

Of what an adaptable nature is the British and Colonial officer! He throws so much energy into whatever really hard work he may have to do that somehow or other he gets through the most difficult and complicated jobs with credit, owing mainly, I think, to his deep sense of public duty and of what, as a gentleman, he feels he owes to the State. His training, his field sports and usual amusements, fit him to lead our men better than any other class could do. When there is hard work to be done all those good qualities appear which make him the best man to lead others. During this expedition our officers carried barrels of pork and other loads as their men did over the portages. There was the truest comradeship between them and their men, whilst discipline, as we understand that high virtue, was strictly maintained.

At Rat Portage I received further letters from our English bishop in the Red River Settlement, giving me the latest news from that place. He and the English-speaking people there had also sent me what I stood most in need of, I mean really good and reliable guides. Without their help I must have lost many men in descending the Winnipeg, that most difficult and dangerous of Canadian rivers. They came under the command of the Rev. Mr. Gardner, an English clergyman, and their arrival was an outward and visible proof that there did exist in that far-off settlement an active party of loyal men. Of course, I eagerly questioned these

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

guides about our route down the Winnipeg River, and their answers would have terrified any whose hearts were not as stout as were those who had come there with me from Thunder Bay. Looking back now at the events of our exciting journey I feel that had not all ranks been as well broken-in to working in the difficult and dangerous waters we had already so successfully surmounted, our descent of the Winnipeg River would have been impossible, indeed out of the question. When those skilled voyageurs saw the boats we had come in they were struck dumb with astonishment, and evidently thought us a mad lot to think of facing the river then before us in any such craft. They soon realized, however, not only that we meant to face it, but that there was no use in trying to dissuade us from what they were pleased to style a rash, a wild venture. They plainly told me that none but those who were not only thoroughly skilled and experienced in canoes, but also well acquainted with the Winnipeg, would attempt its navigation at all.

This was one of the many occasions in my life when I have found it to be popularly supposed that though the British soldier is on all hands admitted to be brave and trustworthy as a fighting man, he is not thought to be of much use in any other capacity—in fact, that he is not a “handy man.” A lengthened and intimate acquaintance with him in all climates, under an infinite variety of circumstances and of sore trials by land and water in moments of extreme danger, in cold and in misery, enables and justifies me, and in fact calls upon me, to give these statements an unqualified denial. Of course, he is very much what he is made and as he is taught by his officers, and I would strongly advise the Captain of a Company who finds his men fail him in any moments of extreme danger or other trial, to resign



## THE QUALITY OF OUR SOLDIERS

his commission. His is the fault, and he is not fit to command British soldiers. If he were "the right sort," his men would never fail him; if he knew his work and had properly trained and taught those under him, he would not have to complain of them in any hour of trial.

I found it to be the common idea all along the route we travelled from Toronto to Fort Garry, that our men and officers could not carry loads over portages, nor perform any arduous labour. But I know also that we left behind us, upon the minds of all who saw us at work upon any of the many portages we crossed, a very different impression. When I refer to the manly virtue of the British soldier, of course I include the splendid soldiers of Canada under that general designation. Indeed, in some respects they are better than our Regulars, for, owing to their colonial bringing-up, they have more initiative, and are more self-reliant.

I had calculated that each Company would take ten days from Rat Portage to Fort Alexander, which is near the mouth of the Winnipeg River, and below all its thirty falls and rapids. The difference in level between these two places is 340 feet, and the distance some 160 miles. When, therefore, the party from the Red River Settlement assured me it would take double that time I was much put out. I had long fixed upon August 23 as the date upon which I should reach Fort Garry, but if these practised voyageurs were correct I should not be there until September 2 at earliest. But I hoped they had erred in their estimate from not knowing what the men of my Brigade could do. This was a serious matter, as the Regular troops had to get back to Montreal over the same route before the frost set in on the Height of Land which forms the water-shed between the Red River and Thunder Bay.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

No one who has ever descended the Winnipeg River in boat or canoe is ever likely to forget that experience. As for myself, the falls, the rapids, the whirlpools, the great rushing angry waters, and the many hair-breadth escapes its navigation involved, are indelibly stamped upon my memory. We had one or two boats wrecked, but no life was lost. The pleasurable excitement of danger is always an agreeable experience, but the enthralling delight of feeling your frail canoe or boat bound under you, as it were, down a steep incline of wildly rushing waters into what looks like a boiling, steaming cauldron of bubbling and confused waters, exceeds most of the other maddening delights that man can dream of. Each man strains for his life at oar or paddle, for no steerage-way can be kept upon your boat unless it be made to run quicker than the water. All depends upon the nerve and skill of the bowsman and steersman, who take you skilfully through the outcropping rocks around you. But the acme of excitement is of short duration, and the pace is too quick to admit of self-examination. No words can describe the rapid change of sensation when the boat jumps through the last narrow and perhaps twisted passage between rocks, into an eddy of the slack water below! You had—perhaps unknowingly—held your breath, whilst every nerve was nigh to breaking point, during the moments of supreme danger; but in a few seconds of time afterwards a long breath of relief comes that enables you to say, “Thank God!” with all heartfelt sincerity.

I made the descent of the Winnipeg River in a birch-bark canoe manned by Irroquois Indians, the most daring and skilful of Canadian voyageurs. The Slave Falls is one of the most beautifully impressive pieces of water in that rapidly running river. The portage by which travellers descending

## THE SLAVE FALLS

this river take their canoes round these falls begins some few hundred yards above them, and is reached without danger. But to my horror the guide took my canoe into midstream, where the current runs down a considerable decline at a most exciting pace. My first wild notion was that he had mistaken these falls for some others, and that nothing then could save us. I sat motionless, speechless and awe-stricken as we raced along the last and swiftest decline into the column of mist and spray, which rising from below seemed to mark the point where the water jumped from the edge of the falls into the steaming frothing jumble of bubbling foam and boisterous waters below. My bowsman was a portly Irroquois whom I did not like much, but he had a jowl that bespoke courageous determination to a remarkable degree. As he dipped his broad paddle far out into the stream upon one side to draw the canoe hard over after it, he had, like most Indians when excited, thrown off his hat, and as his long straight black hair flew back behind his neck and shoulders, I saw his face clearly. It was enough. His lips were closely pressed together, and there was an unmistakable expression of satisfied determination, of assured triumph, about him that said without words, "All is well." In less time than it has taken to write this, the bow turned sharp in towards the shore, and the canoe was in fairly slack water, where two of the crew jumping out held her secure. My bowsman, throwing his broad paddle into the air and catching it again, gave a shout of victory, and all the crew burst out into hilarious and triumphant laughter. Nothing could have saved us from destruction had that paddle broken when he held on to it in the current—as if it were a fixed iron pillar—to draw the canoe's head in towards shore. Nothing pleases or satisfies these Irroquois more

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

than such trials of strength, such victories over dangerous water, which is truly their element. I suppose that by this time the tribe exists no longer as the most daring and skilful of men in all river navigation. The enervating effect of civilization and whiskey upon even the best of uneducated races soon robs them of courage and of all other manly virtues.

I reached Fort Alexander on August 18, and by the 20th all the regulars of the brigade had assembled there. There was not a sick or ailing man amongst them. All looked the picture of health and of soldierlike bearing, though heavy rain had given them wet bivouacs thirteen out of those twenty days in August.

The news from Fort Garry was that Riel had called his followers together, and that 600 of them had answered the summons. He had endeavoured to organize them to resist us, but he was not able to imbue them with any fighting ardour. He was still much troubled in mind about an amnesty, but the Ottawa Government dared not grant it, and even if they had, I assume that the Governor, Lord Lisgar, would not have sanctioned any such outrageous proceeding. As in all previous correspondence, the loyal inhabitants besought me to advance without delay. On the whole, the general tenor of the news indicated that Riel would fight. That cheered our men's hearts. We waited until the following afternoon, Sunday, August 21, in the hope that the two leading companies of militia might arrive in time to go on with us to Fort Garry. I was most anxious to have some of them with me when I attacked Riel, should he decide to fight, but I confess I did not believe that either he or his followers would dare to do so.

The afternoon of Sunday, August 21, was very fine when our little fleet of fifty boats, manned by regular soldiers, set

## ON LAKE WINNIPEG

sail for the mouth of the Red River. We halted for the night in a lovely and well-wooded bay on Lake Winnipeg, our boats drawn up in close order upon its sandy shore. What an interesting picture our bivouac was when viewed from the high bank where I established myself for the night ! Our fires lit up the evening sky, and the temperature was that of a summer evening in the south of Europe. The next morning we steered for the mouth of the Red River, where it joins Lake Winnipeg.<sup>1</sup> That lake is often very stormy and its great waves detained the leading companies of militia, and prevented them, to my regret, from entering Fort Garry with me. As we neared the Red River I was struck with the great contrast between its scenery and the rich beauty of the land and water we had just left behind us. Not a tree was to be seen, only great alluvial flats covered with reeds and rushes, from whose recesses the wild-duck in vast numbers quacked out a loud greeting as we passed. We landed for dinner at a small Indian encampment. Its inhabitants fired their guns to do us honour, and a few presents to their chief soon converted them into helpful friends. They manned a small canoe which started with a half-breed for the lower or Stone Fort on the river and carried messages from me to the Hudson Bay officer in charge there. I had been overtaken on the Winnipeg River by Mr. Smith, now Lord Strathcona, who was then the Governor of the Hudson Bay Company. From him I received every possible help. Indeed, it was by his orders that all his Company's officials assisted us from first to last

<sup>1</sup> To give my reader an idea of its size I would remark that its area is about 9,000 square miles and that it drains some 400,000 square miles of country. It is very shallow, however, having only an average depth of from six to eight feet. It is said to be filling up.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

to the best of their ability. His word was law in those regions. The garrison of two battalions that I left behind at Fort Garry when I started upon my return journey to Montreal, owed much of their comfort during the following long winter months to his kindness. He did all he could to provide for their wants.

Dinner over, we rowed in three lines of boats up the river, our 6-pounder guns in the leading line, and all men ready for action at any moment. We had the wind against us, so we did not reach the Lower Fort that evening as I had hoped.

Upon landing for the night, the chief of the Swampy Indians, who inhabit that locality, paid me a "visit of ceremony." He knew we had started from Lake Superior, but no further news of us had lately reached the Settlement. Until he had seen our boats coming round the river bend he was not aware that even our leading detachment had reached Fort Alexander. The Hudson Bay officer from the Lower Fort, who arrived in the middle of the night, corroborated this statement. He reported that the Fort Garry people did not expect us so soon, and beyond the fact that some of our boats had been seen by Indians on the Lake of the Woods, our doings and whereabouts were unknown to them.

We reached the Lower Fort next morning, August 23, for breakfast, our advance having had much of the triumphal procession about it. As we neared it, the people turned out and cheered us heartily. All the churches below Fort Garry were then Protestant, and their bells now rang out a joyful greeting. As we passed the Indian camps, the occupants of every wigwam came bounding out to fire a salute in honour of the Great Queen's soldiers. When we reached the Stone Fort, the Union Jack was run up by the servants

## A VERY WET BIVOUAC

of the Hudson Bay Company, and as I landed joy was written on the face of everyone. All loyal men had suffered much at the hands of Riel, and terror had seized upon them. His murder of Mr. Scott had had the effect he desired upon the loyal section of the community, for each man in it believed that his life also might be sacrificed at any moment, and remained quiet in consequence.

By discharging all my surplus stores at the Stone Fort, I lightened our boats considerably. I took possession of all the carts and ponies I could find, and thus mounted a number of the Royal Rifles, who marched on both banks of the river to cover the advance upon Fort Garry next day, and protect our boats from surprise. Unhappily, the wind was against us all day, so our progress with oars alone and against the current was very slow. To my extreme regret I was unable to reach Riel's headquarters before darkness set in, and had to bivouac for the night within six miles of them. All ranks were much cheered by the "shave" that ran like wildfire from boat to boat that night, that we were to have a fight next morning. But heavy rain with all its depressing effects at such a moment, came pouring down upon us soon after nightfall. We had looked forward to at least a pretty little field day when our line of skirmishers should enclose Fort Garry and its rebel garrison, as in a net. But by early dawn next morning the whole country, far and near, was a sea of deep and clinging mud. There was then nothing approaching a road in the whole territory, so I had to forego all pomp and circumstance of war in my final advance and had once more to take to our boats and the dreary oar. We were all wet through, very cold and extremely cross and hungry. A cup of hot tea and a biscuit swallowed quickly for breakfast, and all were again at the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

oar by 6 a.m., August 24, 1870. The rain poured "in buckets" upon us, and at places the country was under water. As we neared the cathedral of the English bishop, the Union Jack was loosed from its steeple as an evidence to all people that the rebel rule had ceased and that our Queen's authority was once more paramount there.

I landed at Point Douglas, only two miles from Fort Garry, by road, but six by the river, which there makes a wide bend. A few carts were seized, into which tools and ammunition were transferred, and to two of which the trails of our two small field-pieces were fastened and thus dragged along. The messengers I had sent the previous night into the village round Fort Garry met me here with the assurance that Riel and his gang were still there awaiting anxiously the arrival of Bishop Taché, who was hourly expected. It was confidently asserted that he meant to fight. He had just distributed ammunition—stolen from the Hudson Bay Company's stores—amongst his followers, had had the fort guns loaded, and had closed the gates. I subsequently learned that he and his henchman, a common fellow named Donoghue, had started from Fort Garry during the night to find out where I was and what I was about. But the very heavy rain they encountered was too much for them, and being afraid of capture by our outposts in the dark, they had gone back to the fort as wise as they had left it.

Our march, though short, was very trying from the heavy rain and the deep mud we had to plough through. But as all the people we met assured the men we should have a fight, these small and disagreeable drawbacks were ignored.

Fort Garry stands upon the left bank of the Red River, where the Assiniboine falls into it. The fort itself is a high stone-walled square enclosure, with a large circular tower



## THE REBEL LEADERS BOLT

at each of its four corners. The village of Winnipeg—mostly of wooden houses—was nearly half a mile to the north of the fort, and south of it, at about a couple of hundred yards distance, was a boat bridge over the Assiniboine. My object therefore was by circling round west of the fort to obtain possession of that bridge, or at least to command it with my fire. I should then have Riel and company in the right angle inclosed between the two rivers. Our skirmishers in their advance captured a few of Riel's



FORT GARRY  
(from a contemporary engraving).

so-called councillors, who were bolting in buggies and other means of conveyance.

As I watched the muzzles of the fort guns, I confess that I hoped each moment to see a flash and to hear a round shot rush by me. I knew they had no shells, and that they did not know how to use them if they had had any. But in the rain, and in the thick atmosphere when the rain ceased for a little, it was difficult to see, even through our glasses, if there

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

were men at the guns or not. I sent a few officers who had obtained ponies round the fort to see what was going on in rear of it. They soon returned with the news that Riel had bolted, and that the fort gates were open. It was a sad disappointment to all ranks. Personally I was glad that Riel did not come out and surrender, as he at one time said he would, for I could not then have hanged him as I might have done had I taken him prisoner when in arms against his sovereign. But though we did not catch the fellow, we had successfully carried out the task that was given us. My chief regret was, that neither of the two militia battalions with me had been able to be in at the finish. Every message received from the Red River had urged me to press forward with all speed, as no one could predict what a day lost might bring forth, and I felt bound to do so. But knowing how gallantly and how hard those two militia battalions had worked to get to Fort Garry, I was indeed truly sorry for the disappointment they experienced.

We dragged out some of the guns in Fort Garry, upon which Riel had relied so much, and with them fired a Royal Salute when the Union Jack was run up the flagstaff. From it had hung for months before the rebel flag that had been worked by the nuns of the convent attached to Bishop Taché's cathedral, and presented by them to Riel.

Neither he nor his friends had expected us so early, in fact he had only bolted when news was suddenly brought to him that our skirmishers were in sight. His breakfast was still on the table, and the clothes and arms of himself and party were scattered about his room when we entered it, showing the suddenness and haste of his flight.

I subsequently ascertained that he and his Irish colleague had some difficulty in escaping. They knew that if they

## RIEL SUBSEQUENTLY HANGED

fell into the hands of the loyal settlers they might expect a short shrift. They consequently hurried off as quickly from the fort as they could when our troops came in sight. They soon crossed the Red River, feeling it was safer to have it between them and those who sought to bring them to justice. They hurried on until dark, when they bivouacked for the night. Next morning they found themselves without horses, those they had stolen the day before having strayed off during the night. There were but few farms near on their bank of the river, hence to obtain food they were compelled to cross to the other side. They could find no boat, so proceeded to pull down a snake fence to make a raft. Having no ropes to fasten the rails together, Donoghue was obliged to sacrifice for this purpose the trousers he had lately stolen in Fort Garry. Having safely crossed the river, the farmer whose fence they had pulled down compelled them to pay well for the damage they had done. Shortly afterwards they reached the frontier town of Pembina, in the United States territory, in a forlorn condition, without shoes and with sore and swollen feet. Finding he did not there meet with the cordial reception he had expected from the American citizens, he went to a village some fifty miles to the westward, to which he had previously sent the best of his plunder. He evidently found the game of rebellion an interesting and profitable occupation, for, some fourteen years afterwards, he embarked in another similar revolt. He was less fortunate in his second effort, as he was taken prisoner and duly hanged. No murderer ever better deserved his fate.

Having made arrangements for housing the two militia battalions in Fort Garry for the winter, I sent off between August 29 and September 3, the battalion of the Royal Rifles

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

and the detachments of Royal Artillery and Royal Engineers to Montreal by the same route we had come by. The two militia battalions remained in Fort Garry all the ensuing winter. The Royal Rifles embarked for England that autumn, and are therefore the last regular troops that have served in the beautiful and loyal provinces of Quebec and Ontario. Raised originally in North America for service against the French and Indians, it was but fitting that a battalion of this far-famed and historic regiment should have been the last of our Regular Forces to serve in the grand and lovely valley of the St. Lawrence. I wonder when we shall again have any of our British regiments there? Withdrawn solely for economical reasons, they may yet return when our Imperial position in the world is better understood and appreciated by the nation than it was by our Ministers in 1870.

As a military undertaking, the Red River Expedition was peculiar in many ways. I believe it was the cheapest operation we have ever carried out, when what was accomplished is fairly weighed and considered. The total expense was under £100,000. For that sum about 1,400 men were sent by rail and steamer some 52 miles and then in canoes and boats for 600 miles through a wilderness of rivers, lakes, forests and rocks, where, as no food was to be obtained, everything required had to be taken with us and transported on the soldiers' backs over difficult portages for many miles.

I attribute this economic result chiefly to the fact that it was planned and organized far away from all War Office influence and meddling, and that an able general on the spot—the Hon. James Lindsay, then Commanding in Canada—was allowed a free hand in all that concerned its efficiency. The Cabinet and Parliamentary element in the War Office, that has marred so many a good military scheme, had, I may

## END OF THE RED RIVER EXPEDITION

say, little or nothing to do with it from first to last. When will civilian Secretaries of State for War cease from troubling in war affairs ?

Whilst we were thus busy in forcing our way through and over great natural obstacles to the Red River Settlement to put down an insignificant rebellion, a great war between two powerful European nations raged in France. In England, as elsewhere throughout the civilized world, all thoughts were bent upon its startling events. Would the French Imperial Guard once more strut as conquerors through Prussian cities ? or was Von Moltke to dictate terms to a French Government from his camp in the Champs Elysées ? Those were the subjects which then absorbed public interest in every land. No one even at home paid much, if any, attention to our proceedings in a territory whose great rivers and forests were unknown to them even by name. Our home press was naturally absorbed in a deep consideration of the great military and political problems this Franco-German war had revived. None had room in their columns for any consideration or discussion of far-off prairie affairs. There was no one in authority to say even " Well done ! " to the men whose daring, high military spirit and unsurpassed endurance I have endeavoured to describe. But all of us had something far better than any honours or decorations could have given—I mean the satisfaction of knowing that under difficult and trying circumstances all had done their duty to the best of their ability.

So ended this Red River Expedition sent by the Government of Canada to put down Riel's rebellion and restore order in what is now the splendid province of Winnipeg. As far as fighting is concerned, it was a bloodless campaign, and although great physical difficulties were encountered

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

and manfully overcome by the troops employed, not a life had been lost.

All ranks, both of the Regular and Militia Troops employed, worked as hard as galley slaves throughout this expedition, and they did so cheerfully and intelligently. All were better soldiers, and would, in civil life, be able to earn their bread to better advantage than when they had landed on the shores of Thunder Bay. Every man's heart had been in this novel enterprise, for all had been taken into their leader's confidence ; no attempt had been made to conceal, or even to minimise, the serious obstacles that lay in their path, and they showed their appreciation of this confidence, not only by the amount of work they got through, but by the cheery manner in which they did it. I can draw no distinction between the relative merits or military value of the Regular Soldiers and the Canadian Militiamen who went with me to Red River. Each had arrived at Prince Arthur's Landing with special attributes peculiarly his own, but by the time Fort Garry had been occupied each had acquired the military virtues of the other. What is it that a large army of such men under some great leader could not achieve ? I, for one, don't know.

I made my way back to Montreal over the lakes, rivers and the mountain range I had previously crossed on my way westward to Fort Garry. I was well received by old friends in the commercial capital of Canada, where I was entertained at a public dinner given in my honour.

I returned to England in the steamship that took home General Sir James Lindsay upon the abolition of his position as commanding the forces in Canada. The Government had determined upon the withdrawal of all our troops from the valley of the St. Lawrence in its craze for economy at

## LEAVE CANADA 1870

all costs. In fact, it seemed to be the general wish of the party then in office to get rid of our colonial possessions as a source of weakness, and above all things, in the interests of national economy. It was a most unstatesmanlike policy, for as long as we kept a few British battalions in the chief towns of Canada we fostered a living and most useful flesh-and-blood connection between it and the Mother Country. Its people highly valued the presence of Royal Troops amongst them, for it helped to foster the feeling of British nationality to which they attached so much importance, and these troops also provided the means for giving some military instruction to their splendid Militia. To officers who, like myself, had long been associated with that force in camps and cantonments, it seemed to be the action of madness, not of Statesmen, to withdraw from them that efficacious means of instruction in a soldier's duties. We knew that, should England at any time require help in a serious war, the Canadian Militia might be depended upon to furnish a most valuable contingent. But that was not a consideration that had much weight with either Mr. Gladstone or his colleagues.

In leaving Canada I parted from several staunch and able friends to whom I owed much for many a kind action. Foremost in that number were Mr. George Stephen, now Lord Mount-Stephen, and Colonel George Denison, of the Canadian Militia. The first I had known well throughout my long service in America as a wise and able man, an honest straightforward counsellor in all matters and a real friend in need. Natural gifts strengthened by deep study have made the latter better fitted for high military command than ninety-five per cent. of our Army officers. It is a source of pride to me to have known intimately and to be still the friend of two such men.

## CHAPTER XLI

### Army Reform Begun in Earnest, 1871

I WAS supposed to have done very well in command of the Red River Expedition, and upon my return home, was received by the Commander-in-Chief, His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, in a flattering manner and with all that *bonhommie* for which he is so well known in our Army. I found he knew much about Canadian politics and was well informed regarding all matters that related to the rebellion in the Red River and to the military measures taken to suppress it. He asked me a great deal about the Canadian military forces, in whom he was much interested, and was much gratified when I expressed a very high opinion of their loyalty, zeal and general efficiency. He was good enough to let me understand that I might expect early re-employment upon the staff. But I soon found that according to the views then entertained by our old general officers, I had committed a serious crime in presuming to express my views upon military matters as freely as I had done in *The Soldier's Pocket Book*, a military handbook I had recently published. However, Mr. Cardwell was then Secretary of State for War, and I was told it was his intention that I should be appointed to the Headquarter Staff upon the first suitable opportunity. He had already determined upon



## THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR,

the abolition of purchase, and wanted men about him in the War Office with modern views upon Army matters.

The startling suddenness with which war had been declared by Prussia, great battles won and proud France struck down and brought to her knees, set all Europe thinking. The rapid but evidently well calculated sequence with which momentous events had followed upon the opening of this war had roused the conscience of the most peace-loving of our statesmen. It silenced even those who had been loudest in denunciation of war as the inhuman practice of a barbarous age, and in their honest, though foolish, pooh-poohing of any possibility of its recurrence upon a great scale in civilized Europe. The humane theories they had loudly asserted and preached from thousands of platforms to audiences only too anxious to agree with them, had vanished in the smoke of the German breechloader. The great war of 1870 taught us serious lessons upon all military subjects. The sudden collapse of the French army, which in the Crimea we had regarded with admiration and esteemed so highly, astonished us and most of the European nations. It had gone down before the thoroughly drilled and well taught short-service army of Prussia.

In 1868, when Mr. Gladstone became Prime Minister, the refrain of all our political music was a glorification of the protection afforded by our insular position in Europe. But men began now to question the soundness of this faith. The shock was felt everywhere. The slow-moving and ever unready England felt this Franco-German earthquake, and it seems to have awakened even Mr. Gladstone, one of the most peace-loving, war-detesting Ministers who ever ruled any nation's destinies. For the moment, at least, the possibility of war being forced unexpectedly upon us became a

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

necessary factor in all our calculations of the national dangers it behoved us to be prepared for. The fate of France had struck terror even into the hearts of men who had previously never wearied of crying "Peace, peace; war is a past horror." Her rapid overthrow became all at once an object lesson to most of us. Every dark cloud that appeared upon the international horizon seemed meant as a warning and impressed even our national pilots, who before 1870 would make no suitable provision against possible nights of darkness, of storm, and of danger. Our absolute unpreparedness for war apparently startled Mr. Cardwell, in whose calm judgement Mr. Gladstone trusted.

One of the world's very wisest men told his enormously rich friend that "He who has the best steel will have all the gold." But the modern Liberal thought himself wiser than this Greek philosopher. His view of the true military policy for England was, that as long as our coffers were full of gold we could at any moment of emergency obtain all we required for the defence of these Islands and of our Empire throughout the world.

"We don't want to fight, but, by Jingo! if we do,  
We've got the men, we've got the ships, we've got the  
money too."

This popular music-hall ditty, though of a more recent date, expresses in plain words the faith which the Liberal Government, with Mr. Gladstone at its head, had wished the nation to believe in, and to hold by, previous to the year 1870.

But the great bulk of our educated and practical soldiers had already learnt from the lesson taught to Europe by the Franco-German War that we must change our Army System or cease to be a great Power. The old system of repairs to

## OUR OUT OF DATE ARMY SYSTEM 1871

the rickety coach in which our military administration had travelled for over half a century, would no longer suffice. Formerly, when its wreck seemed imminent, we were content to oil its creaking wheels and even at times to put in a new spoke here and there to keep them in working order. But most of our thoughtful soldiers had already realized that the machine had then reached a phase when it could be patched up no longer. The ironwork might possibly be reforged, but the whole of its body and superstructure was rotten and beyond the hope of any further effective repair.

After the Franco-German War the military system of the conquering power was carefully studied in all its details by those who wished to reform our land forces. We quickly realized that our Army was organized upon obsolete principles and that it had fallen behind the armies of the other great European Powers in efficiency, although proportionally its direct cost in money was far greater. The "base-rock" in the military system of all the great military Powers was, that every healthy male upon reaching manhood should be compelled to serve in the Army until he had become a well-trained soldier. But that was a measure which no political party with us would seriously contemplate. It was evident to all who studied the matter that the first practical step we should therefore take was to create an effective Army Reserve by the adoption of a comparatively short period of service with the Colours. Our national conditions rendered the formation of such a Reserve a peculiarly difficult matter, for unlike most of the other great nations we have large garrisons to furnish for those stations abroad which are the centres and bases for our Navy. Without them, our fleets could not keep the sea during war in these days of steam. India alone requires about 70,000 British soldiers

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

in profound peace, and practically, even during periods when no war was in the air, one half of our standing army must at all times be out of England. Until we adopt some form of obligatory military and naval service, the organization of our Army must always be, therefore, a far more complicated affair than it is in any other country. The Party then in office, as is customary with all parties, were very averse to any increase to our standing army.

I shall not attempt to enter upon any description of the new system that was proposed and adopted ; I wish rather to tell how it was effected. For home defence we had on paper a fairly large military force in the Regular Army, the Militia, the Yeomanry, and the Volunteers. The Militia was then a badly organized and a very imperfectly instructed force. The Yeomanry, then only partially drilled and armed and equipped as cavalry, could be of little practical use in war, and the Volunteers, with no organization beyond that of the battalion, did not even shoot well. There was no cohesion between these differently organized military bodies, and in fact we had no military system at all. There were no arrangements prepared, no regulations laid down for placing in the field even a small army, much less any general plan for the mobilization of all our military forces for war purposes in any case of emergency. Many who had been in the Crimea, especially amongst the educated soldiers who had been selected for the staff towards the end of the war, fully realized all this. They deplored our military inefficiency and the absence of all system at the Horse Guards, then the headquarters of our Army. That wonderful institution, which had forgotten nothing and had learnt nothing since Waterloo, was sadly behind the time in every way. It was generally felt by all who carefully studied our

## GENERAL SIR PATRICK McDOUGALL

complicated military problem; that the Army could be most easily and economically augmented by making the Yeomanry, Militia and Volunteer forces really and in every sense part and parcel of it. This was eventually effected, and the history of our recent war in South Africa amply justifies the military wisdom of those who urged this measure upon the country.

Fortunately for the State, an extremely able officer, General Sir Patrick McDougall, had just been created head of our Reserve Forces. He had been commandant of our old Senior Department at Sandhurst, the precursor of our present Staff College, and he had recently been the adjutant-general of the Canadian Militia. He had brought to the latter thankless office a clear brain and a bright imagination untrammelled by obsolete notions upon military subjects. His capacity for work was very great, and his perfect and persuasive manners won much upon the Duke of Cambridge's susceptibilities. He was well aware of how thoroughly our antiquated military system required sweeping reforms to bring it up to a level with modern requirements, and he had also the courage of his opinions to say so, a quality which few of even our best senior officers then possessed. It was, however, in my opinion, the feeling that the Army Reformer had behind him a strong Minister of War who would protect him from the fierce enmity of the 'old school' that gave him and others the courage to express their opinions openly. Had it not been for Mr. Cardwell's and Lord Northbrook's constant support and encouragement, those of us who were bold enough to advocate a thorough reorganization of our military system, would have been "provided for" in distant quarters of the British world "where no mention of us more should be heard."

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

The startling suddenness with which war had been declared by the King of Prussia, and the rapidity with which that declaration was followed by the invasion of France, by great victories won, and the stupendous results achieved as the German armies pressed westward was undreamt of outside of the Prussian War Office. All was done in a well-calculated sequence according to a long prepared and well understood plan. Not only the unfortunate victim, self-confident France, but all Europe was appalled as if by some terrific and unlooked for upheaval of nature. But to the educated soldier the rapid progress and great achievements of the Prussian army were a serious lesson. Military history had long taught him that nations content to rely on paper treaties rather than on their own well organized naval and military strength must fall eventually. Many able men here began even to doubt the sufficiency of that much vaunted protection which the Channel had so long been said to secure us.

Throughout the length and breadth of Britain men asked one another, "Are we safe really in these Islands? Or is it true, as our best soldiers assure us, that our military system is so obsolete, our Army organization so unsuited to modern requirements, that our power of resistance—as in the case of France recently—would utterly break down if tested by invasion?" All of us remembered the Great Duke of Wellington's celebrated letter to Sir John Burgoyne in 1849, upon the defenceless state of England, and in which he strove to arouse the nation and make it realize its danger.

In common with a number of our educated officers in 1871, I knew what was wrong in the Army and I did not hesitate to expose it. I preached reform in and out of season. Our Army Regulations were drawn in the interests

## EARNEST ARMY REFORMERS OF 1871

and for the convenience of the officer. He usually liked to do little, and all those who opposed every military change simply because it was change, defended him in doing that little. To study his profession, to become a master of his trade was the rôle of a very small knot of officers at that epoch. The great bulk of them—ninety-nine out of every hundred—liked the existing system of regimental promotion by purchase, slightly, very slightly, tempered by seniority. It was a simple process that prevented what the most stupid amongst us called favouritism, what the wise believed would be selection for merit, and it was the introduction of that sort of selection which the old school dreaded most. I took my stand on professional efficiency, and at once became very objectionable to the old generals and their following in the Army. Of the science of war, or of its recent practice in Europe, they understood next to nothing, and had a horror of the colonel or the general who, having studied the matter, set any store by it.

I was impatient and in a hurry : my nature would not brook the sapping of a regular siege : I wanted to assault the place at once, and I did so. The slow process of approach to the enemy's works that a politician versed in House of Commons procedure would have adopted seemed not only odious and cowardly, but to be unsuited to the object our Army Reformers aimed at. I soon found myself surrounded by the ablest soldiers of promise, all of whom were of my way of thinking as to the reforms required. The fact of my having seen a great deal of service, and of having lately led a difficult expedition from Canada into the Red River country, gave me some weight in bringing those reforms before the Army and before those in Parliament who dabbled in Army affairs.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

But my best chance was that I found in office a great Minister at the head of Army matters; a clear-headed, logical-minded lawyer, though as absolutely ignorant of our Army and of war or its requirements as our civilian War Ministers always are.

The Army was then divided—but by no means in equal numbers—into two great sections, the old school and the new. In the former, by far the most numerous, was nearly every general officer and all the thoughtless in the Army. Our Commander-in-Chief then, was the Duke of Cambridge, a very clever Prince, who knew the Army thoroughly, and was looked up to and most justly liked by all ranks in it. Educated to believe in the Army as he found it, because it had been made by the Great Duke of Wellington, he honestly and firmly believed that what had been created by such a master of war, must be the best for all time. He had not, apparently, fully taken in the great changes which the system of universal military service had produced in European armies. He refused to believe in an Army Reserve, and honestly looked upon our endeavour to create one here as not only a mad folly, but as a crime against the State. No more loyal and devoted Englishman ever wore a red coat, but nothing would or could convince him that an Army Reserve in this country would be forthcoming when wanted. Recent experience, however, has proved how absolutely wrong the old school of officers were upon this point, and no man more than His Royal Highness has ever been thoroughly converted to modern ideas on this point.

I have mentioned this about a Royal Personage under whom I was long privileged to work, because I liked him more and more the better I knew him. Indeed no one who served for so many years on his staff could fail to love his



## H.R.H. THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE

amiable qualities, or to admire his manliness of feeling. His honesty of purpose, loyalty to the Army, devotion to duty, sincere patriotism and deep and real attachment to his Queen and country pervaded all he did. I rejoice to have this opportunity for thus expressing my feelings regarding so great a Personage, because in the course of our long intimacy I had often to differ materially from his views upon Army matters and to propose changes in which, at the time, he did not always concur.

In looking back at my long connexion with the War Office, it is curiously interesting to note the out-of-date mode in which the command and administration of our Army was conducted when I first joined the headquarter staff. I was only a colonel in the adjutant-general's department, and my special work was the discipline of the Army. All important court martials came before me, and when officers "got into scrapes," I had to deal with them under the orders of the adjutant-general. If the matter was of a very serious nature, the adjutant-general laid it before the Commander-in-Chief. But such cases were few.

My work soon became more important, however, for Mr. Cardwell had determined to abolish the Purchase System and to reorganize the Army upon modern lines. The recent war between France and Germany woke up our thinking soldiers, but there were not many of them at that time in the superior ranks of our Army. It began at last to dawn upon the mind of even the taxpayer that our Army was as far behind that of France as that army had lately proved itself to be behind the army of Germany. Before the Franco-German War we had rather modelled ourselves upon the French army. In the Crimea we had found our military system in all its methods and phases to be hopelessly out of

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

tune with modern ideas, and were astonished when we realized that it was obsolete when compared with that of the army which the Emperor Louis Napoleon had sent into the field. We all felt, indeed we were certain, that our regimental officers possessed all the qualities required for leadership, and the pages of history equally convinced us that as men, as fighting animals, the British soldiers were certainly not inferior to the French rank and file. But yet, though all thoughtful men who had served before Sebastopol realized how much our whole Army System needed reform, none of any real importance was effected. The Franco-German struggle at last opened the eyes of our people to the real state of our out-of-date Army, and to our absolute military inefficiency.

Most of our old-fashioned, and may I venture to say, of our uneducated officers, refused to believe this. Their minds would accept no argument on the subject. An Army that had been organized by so great a man as Wellington, Napoleon's conqueror, must be, according to their traditions, the first in the world : to allow this Radical young Army school with all its new views—"made in Germany"—to touch that sacred Ark, would be worse than sacrilege, it would be national folly !

Those who then fought against Army Reform were thoroughly honest, but yet they constituted a serious danger to the Empire, for they had possession of all the high posts in the Army. To differ from them was to be declared a Radical, a positive danger to the State, and to be debarred from all chance of employment in the higher grades. I was then classed as one of those dangerous officers. To lessen our influence everything we did was painted in dark colours as the acts of fanatics who wished to destroy the old institu-

## OUR RANK AND FILE IN 1871

tion of the kingdom, even of Royalty itself. I felt this extremely, knowing in my heart how sincere, how even old-fashioned was the nature of my devotion to the Crown, and it did not make me love those the more who thus defamed me. Since then, especially in recent years, it has amused me to meet those who, at the time I refer to, were loudest in denouncing the Army Reserve that Mr. Cardwell was determined to build up. With the exception of the few keen-sighted men who knew how thoroughly our Army was in organization behind all the great armies of Europe, the bulk of our officers endorsed the denunciations fulminated against the proposed Army Reserve by those who then filled most of the high positions in our Army. The chief cry against it was, that whilst it would cost much, we could never count upon it when war came suddenly upon us. It is difficult to argue against a prophecy of this nature. The old-fashioned officer had been educated in the notion that it was essential he should see his men every day in order to be certain they were at hand. It was not our custom then to trust much in the honour and patriotism of our soldiers during peace, though we were certain they would follow us in action.

But the man of experience in the field as a Company officer had learnt differently. During days and nights and weeks and months passed in the field or in the trenches before Sebastopol amongst our very badly paid men, one learned to understand and to appreciate our comrades in the ranks. It is when you bivouac amongst them that you hear their views upon men and things most openly, for they are wont to argue plainly amongst themselves upon all matters connected with their daily life. They express opinions upon the character of their officers and about the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

generals in command very freely, and as a rule with much justice. It is thus, and when leading them under fire, that you learn what fine manly fellows our privates are, and what is their standard of honour. It was thus I learnt to trust them, and—barring some black sheep who may at times be found even amongst the bishops of every Church—I prefer their code of honour to that of the tradesman or typical politician.

Our Rank and File are generally right in the estimate of their officer's worth and character. Whilst they hate the bully who does not enter into their feelings, and who treats them as if they had none, they have the most enthusiastic admiration for the officer who treats them kindly as well as justly, and above all, who in moments of extreme danger leads well in front. They quickly scent out the sneak and the poor of heart. In fact, taking him all in all, the British private, as I know him, is a fine noble fellow. The captain of a Company on active service whose heart is with his men, who never spares himself at their expense, who cheerfully shares their discomforts, who does his duty by them, and who, well in front, "leads them straight" in action, occupies a position of far more intense enjoyment and satisfaction than is to be found in any other position that life affords. At least such is my experience.

Holding these views I always scoffed at the warnings of those who would not believe in the honesty of our Reserve men, and I never failed to do all in my power to further the creation of that splendid body which so honestly, so cheerfully, rejoined the Colours for the late war in South Africa. Without it, what should we, with our absurdly small Army, have done then? And yet, I remember hearing it and the Reserve system generally decried and denounced publicly by a now distinguished soldier at a great dinner given in the City some twenty years ago.

## CHAPTER XLII

Lord Airey, Lord Northbrook, Mr. Cardwell  
1871-1873

WHEN I joined the Army headquarter staff, it was lodged in the time-honoured and beautiful building known as "The Horse Guards." But Mr. Cardwell had already determined to bring over the Commander-in-Chief and all the Army Staff, bag and baggage, to that unhealthy and curious congeries of houses in Pall Mall known as the War Office. The Commander-in-Chief resisted the proposed change, but to little purpose except to embitter the feeling which had long existed between the two establishments.

Tradition is a strong factor in all old armies like ours, but what is based upon most cherished memories has often to bend before the hard exigencies of new convictions and modern necessities. Pipe clay, stiff leather stocks, ramrod-like rigidity on parade, complicated drill and many other time-honoured practices have all had to make way for a new order of things, more practical, though possibly less theatrical. In 1870 it was evident that our parliamentary-governed Army could be ruled no longer upon its old lines, and all but the most stubborn of obstructionists soon recognized that fact. The best of our thinking soldiers had for some years realized that the Army was not on a level with modern military requirements, and that great changes were

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

necessary in its organization, education and training, and in the system upon which it was officered and commanded. This question was felt to be more pressing than any demand for domestic legislation, and the Cabinet faced it boldly. Mr. Gladstone had the utmost confidence in the wisdom and cool judgement of his old friend, Mr. Cardwell, and resolved to support whatever measures he recommended. Our ablest soldiers pronounced our military organization to be out of date, and the Army to be too small to fulfil the purposes for which it existed, and it was generally known that our soldiers, as well as our fortresses at home and abroad, were armed with obsolete weapons.

This was a terrible awakening to a man of Mr. Gladstone's essentially non-military bent of mind, and who wanted for domestic objects all the money he could obtain by ordinary taxation.

Our War Office, in previous years the dreary abode of overworked clerks and of despairing staff officers, soon became as full of life as any upturned beehive. Committees upon matters vital to the interests, to the very safety, of our empire, sat daily under Mr. Cardwell's inspiration. The modern school of military thought, for the first time in the Queen's reign, now obtained the ear of the public. Mr. Cardwell asked for and obtained the advice of the young school, sifted it, and finally adopted the most important of the measures they urged upon him. No British War Minister ever responded more readily to demands made upon him by his military advisers. He gave new life to our old Army, and according to my views of public life, to no one consequently in my day is the nation more deeply indebted.

The enthusiastic but thoughtful soldier wishes England to be provided, in the first place with the greatest and best

## PARTY INTERESTS ALL-IMPORTANT

fleet in the world, and secondly with a thoroughly efficient army of sufficient strength for our military needs at home and abroad. But in times of profound peace he never hopes to obtain everything the Government in power should provide for the Army. When our old-fashioned castles, with their exposed walls, had been rendered useless by the invention of rifled guns, it was a long time before the most important of our fortresses were restored to their previous relative strength. We went on patching here, and squandering large sums there to little purpose, sooner than face the big question of entire reconstruction boldly. It is only the great military nations of Europe, poor though they may be in revenue, who have the sense to rearm their fighting men as a body, when the discovery of some new explosive or some new mechanism of musket or field gun warns them that it is essential for national safety to do so. Hitherto we have escaped from what might be the fatal disaster with which such a military policy might at any time overwhelm us. It is the natural tendency of all party political associations, such as our modern Cabinets have come to be, to postpone any full consideration of the nation's military needs in favour of the immediate, the direct interests of party politics. These latter are too often allowed to outweigh the necessity for any large expenditure upon the defence of our shores, or upon needed improvements in the fighting power and efficiency of our military forces. Every man now is somewhat of a politician, and the measures which party interests push to the front are understood by millions to whom our national military necessities do not appeal. Too often those necessities are only understood by our educated soldiers, a limited class who have little or no political weight in the country. Yet this information is doubtless recorded

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

in every foreign War Office. The large and increasing proportion of men with votes amongst us naturally tends to make political leaders pay more attention to domestic wants than to great questions of national defence that may never be brought practically home to all classes. As regards the possibility of war, "Not in our time, O Lord!" must often be the daily prayer of those who in office deliberately incur such possible, such awful, risks. Indeed, it is well known to the officers employed in Pall Mall that only in moments of more or less national panic can they hope to obtain what their professional education and knowledge warns them is absolutely necessary for the safety of the empire at home and abroad.

When I joined the Army headquarter staff in 1871, the Adjutant-General was Sir Richard, afterwards Lord Airey, the wisest and ablest soldier it was ever my lot to do business with. Indeed, I never knew any one in our Army who was better fitted for high military command. He received me at the Horse Guards with the courtly and reserved dignity which was so eminently characteristic of the man. His old-world and stately manners—that reminded me of my father—were most taking with all who had to work with him. Although anxious to bring on the young officers whom he thought best of, he was always distant with his subordinates until he knew them well. When, either at home or in the Crimea, he sent you on some particular duty, having told you what he wanted, it was not safe to ask him questions. His usual reply to the inquiring subordinate was: "You have your orders, come and tell me when you have carried them out." He used to say that it was most desirable to make young staff officers think for themselves, and that their very mistakes at first would be their best lessons for



## GENERAL LORD AIREY, 1871

the future. He had very justly great influence with the Duke of Cambridge, who, recognizing his ability, leaned much upon him. He knew the Army thoroughly, had commanded a Line battalion with the greatest credit, and had made it second to none. He had also served under Lord Hardinge as Military Secretary at the Horse Guards, and was consequently well acquainted generally with the office routine there. He was the only man whom I ever knew well who had personally done duty with the "Great Duke." I have already mentioned how thoroughly he was looked up to by all that was best in our Crimean army, and how ardently all who then knew him well had hoped to have seen him at its head. Thoroughly educated in the science, as well as conversant with the practice, of his profession, he could teach all ranks their duty. Cool, collected, never excited, he understood mankind and all its weaknesses, and, what is of great advantage to the highly-placed staff officer at Army headquarters, he was well connected, and was intimate with what is commonly known as "Society."

At my first interview with him upon my return from Canada, he was very complimentary in his remarks upon the manner in which the Red River Expedition had been planned and carried out. He fully appreciated its many peculiar difficulties, as his knowledge of the backwoods enabled him to estimate them at their proper value. In my many rides with him subsequently, he told me why it was he had at one time emigrated with his family to Ontario, intending to make it his home. His uncle, Colonel the Hon. Thomas Talbot, owned a great district of country in Canada about as large as an ordinary sized German principality, and had established himself upon it with an English household of servants, as a grand seigneur. I think he had served in the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Peninsula, at any rate had long been a personal friend of the great Duke of Wellington. Feeling he was growing old, and being lonely in his western home, he wrote to his nephew, Colonel Richard Airey, who had married a Talbot, and whose mother also had been one of that family, asking him to go to Canada and live with him as his heir. Sir Richard was then the Assistant Adjutant-General at the Horse Guards, and did not at all relish a proposal that would remove him from a profession he loved and in which he was, from his great ability and scientific military knowledge, bound to rise high in the event of war. But he was poor and had a family. He laid the matter before the Great Duke, knowing that his uncle had been one of his personal friends. The answer he received was, "You must go, you must go." He added, however, that he would give him a year's leave, and if he found at its expiration that a Canadian life did not suit him, he would re-employ him when he returned home. Many were the interesting stories Sir Richard told me of his life in the backwoods of Canada, but the repetition of them would be out of place here. Suffice it to say that for several reasons his uncle's establishment was not to his taste. He consequently returned home and became Military Secretary under General Lord Hardinge, who upon the Duke of Wellington's death had become Commander-in-Chief.

Lord Airey was the only educated soldier of great ability who was ever Adjutant-General in my time. He was a courtier, and knew how to avoid all argument upon subjects it would be unwise to discuss if he wished to exercise any effective or useful influence upon matters of most importance. He accepted the inevitable, and in order to hold his own where great principles were involved he pretended to agree generally with old-fashioned dogmas at which he

## GENERAL LORD AIREY IN THE CRIMEA

laughed in private. His career of usefulness in the Crimea had been unfortunately brought to an end in the following way.

Excessive overwork, want of food, of blankets and warm clothing, and above all things of firewood to cook with, had decimated our army before Sebastopol during the winter of 1854-5. After the battle of Inkerman it had become too small even for the defence of the Siege works we had already constructed, and we began to realize that we had originally accepted a share in the siege that was out of all proportion with the number of our men. It was to the military ignorance of our Cabinet in sending into the field so inadequately small and so very badly equipped an army we must attribute our misfortunes during the winter of 1854-5. To save their own credit they wanted a scapegoat upon whom to shift all responsibility for the sufferings to which they had, through ignorance, exposed our soldiers, and Sir Richard Airey, the Quartermaster-General in the field, was selected for that purpose. Some newspapers had held him up to public execration as responsible for all our misery, as being useless, ignorant of war and of how to wage it successfully. In order to obtain some plausible, some specious grounds for shifting the blame for all the miseries our soldiers had endured from their own shoulders to his, and to make him and other *military chiefs* in the field responsible for those miseries, the Cabinet, in the autumn of 1855, determined to send two special commissioners to the seat of war to inquire into the causes of our misfortunes during the previous winter and spring. Colonel Tulloch and Sir J. McNeill, M.D., were selected for the purpose, and upon reaching Balaclava in March, 1856, they at once began to collect evidence. They carried no weight in the Army, where neither of them had ever been

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

heard of before, and they were, in fact, unsuited in every respect for such a delicate task. Amongst others whom they examined they put a series of questions to Sir Colin Campbell. I remember his amusing description of those two gentlemen when speaking of them in India, as a "damned doctor and a colonel who had never been under any hotter fire than that of his own office fire in London." His indignation was expressed in strong terms when he mentioned the questions put to him—an experienced soldier—by men who knew nothing of war or of its difficulties.

The reports of their proceedings, as far as they went; are to be found amongst the Parliamentary papers of the time, and should be studied by all ambitious officers.

From Lord Airey I heard many an amusing description of what may be justly called, and what he considered to be, his "trial" before the Board of Generals who sat at Chelsea to consider the charges brought against him by his accusers. The "prosecution," however, broke down hopelessly, and ended in a fiasco that was almost comical. He told me that after he had delivered his "opening address," one of his traducers had such pains in his stomach he would never again appear before the Board, and that the other poor man, also refusing to attend, was heard of no more! The Army laughed loudly at this result, but as I have said above, the fact that these accusations had been listened to by the Government of the day seemed to have robbed Lord Airey of all his old military zeal, and as far as I could judge he was never the same man again. Thenceforth he seemed to regard his duties as mere routine matters to be performed with skill and care; but enthusiasm entered no more into his daily discharge of them. He apparently resented the disgrace that had been so unjustly put upon him, and the

## RIDES ROUND LONDON

unwarranted injury to his reputation as a soldier that had been done him by those who ought to have been the first to defend him. He said, in talking this over with me years afterwards, that the Government of the day had from cowardice given way to the clamour raised against him in order to screen their own shortcomings. He told me that when brought home to answer these absurd charges, he was warned by influential friends he might expect the treatment meted out to Admiral Byng just a century before.

I had joined the Quartermaster-General's staff soon after the fall of Sebastopol, and I can speak from personal knowledge of the esteem he was then held in by all who were in daily contact with him.

When I first joined the Horse Guards staff, I rode much with him. Almost every fine Sunday, when we were both in town, we wandered about the commons near London. He knew every field where we could have a gallop, and knew where we could best negotiate each fence. He was a first rate horseman, and loved the animals he rode. Ever since my first wound—when I was shot through the thigh—I can grip my saddle with one leg only, and should my horse swerve at a fence I have often much difficulty in keeping my seat. He knew this, and my efforts to follow his lead amused him. He was the most charming and instructive of companions, understanding Society and the world generally better than most men. In manners he was a thorough courtier, and often laughed at himself for being so. I realized from his manner when talking to me about Army matters that I was hated in certain quarters because of my opinions upon all points of military organization, and because I alone of those in office at the Horse Guards would not follow the dictates of my military superiors, and pre-

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

sumed to express openly my own views to Mr. Cardwell at War Office meetings. This conduct on my part was, he said, looked upon as a species of high treason. Because I held strong views upon the great military value of our Auxiliary Forces, and of the Volunteers especially, I was looked upon as a sort of traitor to the old traditions of our Army. According to the reasoning of our out-of-date Army school, such opinions could only be entertained by a Radical, that most dangerous of all beings according to its notions; and the fact that I soon became intimate with Mr. Cardwell confirmed many in this opinion, as that Minister was known to be bent upon Army Reform.

I felt such a reform to be absolutely necessary if our Army was to be converted into an efficient fighting force, and rejoiced to find that Mr. Cardwell took me somewhat into his confidence. But I was only one of several then in the War Office who did their best to help him in the most difficult task that any British War Minister has ever had to tackle.

In the first place, the Under-Secretary of State for War, Lord Northbrook, was thoroughly imbued with the conviction that our Army, in its organization and methods, was far behind the best European armies. I need not, indeed it would be unbecoming in me to dwell upon his ability, his power of work, his military intuition, the fearless determination with which he approached all questions of Army Reform, and the amount of study he had bestowed upon the organization of foreign armies. He supported Mr. Cardwell in all his proposed reforms, and convinced him of others that were still required. He was a thorough-going man of business, and a statesman who examined for himself every new proposal made by the ardent young Army Reformers then around him. He was the mainstay of the new English

## THE OLD SCHOOL AND ARMY RESERVE

Army school, which the Franco-German war had recently called into existence. He judged its teachings and its proposals on their own merits, and when he adopted them, it was because he believed in them, and not from that love of change for change's sake, with which crime many then charged our Army Reformers. The book of our military system—if it deserved to be called a “system”—was open before him, and all the old officers of whom the Army Headquarters Staff then chiefly consisted, were at hand to expound and praise its written and unwritten regulations.

Never having had any turn for party politics, it concerned me little whether I was classed as Tory, Liberal, or destructive Radical, and it amused me to hear men describe me as belonging to the last named party. I had been brought up in what I may style the strict sect of Church and State Toryism, but I could not be an obstructive Tory in military matters, for I knew too well that our Army was absolutely behind the age in every way.

Any one who understands the practical working of our Constitution, knows that there is, and will always be, a point beyond which annual Army expenditure must not be permanently increased. For the time being we had practically nearly reached that point already. To have hoped, therefore, that any Administration would allow us to keep on foot during peace a standing army of sufficient strength to have given us, for instance, a field army such as that we sent to South Africa in 1899–1900, would have been the dream of a visionary. But it was no easy matter to make the old-fashioned officer realize this. He refused to believe in an Army Reserve, and asserted that it would not be forthcoming when most urgently wanted. He would not accept the assurance that the only system under which we could ever

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

hope to have a military force sufficient for our wants, and that would always be available for sudden emergencies, was that which would supply us with a large Reserve of trained soldiers, who, whilst living chiefly on the wages they earned as civilians in time of peace, should be bound by a daily retaining fee to come out for military duty whenever the State required their services. Our recent Boer War has shown us how absolutely essential that system is for us as a nation.

Whilst Mr. Cardwell was in office I enjoyed my work at Army Headquarters. It was most interesting, and I imagined I was of use there. I certainly worked hard, and by the united efforts of others about me, who also recognized the necessity of Army Reform, many most useful changes in organization, drill and equipment were effected. But the opposition in Parliament, in Society, and even in the Army itself to any radical change in our out of date Army organization, was enormous. The old Tory officer would listen patiently to no proposals on the subject, and short of starting a new Army upon entirely new principles, I often despaired of Mr. Cardwell being able to carry through Parliament the useful military reforms he aimed at. This strong Conservative dislike to change was shared by our officers generally, and defended by their kinsfolk and friends in Parliament. This was so strong a castle of obstruction, that many believed it could only be carried by a *coup de main*, and for that Mr. Cardwell was I know prepared, if at the last moment he found himself "cornered." Once or twice it was thought that Mr. Gladstone seemed inclined to give in: he never fully understood the question in all its bearings, and it was certainly in every sense uncongenial to his mind: it did not enter into his philosophy. But without



## THE ABOLITION OF PURCHASE

any attempt to master its details, he adopted Mr. Cardwell's costly proposal to abolish the long-established Army system of "purchase" as the foremost object of his policy at the moment. This proposal was so strenuously opposed by all the Conservative and richer classes, that I assumed at the time—whether rightly or wrongly I know not—he must have thought it could not therefore fail to be appreciated generally by his own followers. Did not his Radical friends hail with pleasure every enactment that was odious to the better classes? Surely, therefore, this abolition of purchase would be generally regarded as a great Radical victory!

There is no Statesman for whose memory I entertain a greater regard than I do for that of Mr. Cardwell. And no public man I have known was ever more misunderstood except by the soldiers he had to work with. Most cultivated by taste and education, he possessed a charm for all who knew him well. Soft hearted, amiable and full of consideration for those who were worthy of it, no man knew better how to hold his own against unfair pressure. Always patient in listening to the views of others, calm and civil and guardedly polite to those who differed with him, he did not easily alter the resolutions he had arrived at, or the opinions he had formed after he had fully grasped any subject. Of a legal turn of mind, he weighed the conflicting convictions of those who were entitled to express them upon Army matters. No judge was ever in a more difficult position than he found himself about the time I joined the head-quarter staff of the Army in 1871. The points he had to decide, intricate even for the initiated, were upon a great subject that had never before come within the limit of his political considerations. The nature of the so-called canals in Mars had previously entered as little into his studies, or

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had as little occupied his thoughts, as had the military systems of Europe, and least of all that of England. The subject was not congenial to his tastes, and there was nothing in common between him and the fighting British soldier. The ambitions, the prospects, the feelings and prejudices of our officers were not known to him. He did not himself belong to what I may call a military family, and until he became Secretary of State for War he could have heard little intelligent discussion upon Army matters. He had of course gathered from newspapers, during the progress of the 1870 war, that the German army was a magnificently designed and well built machine for enforcing the will of the nation and for the protection of its national territory. He may have seen comparisons made in the European press between it and the old-fashioned British Army. Many public lectures even had been given by English officers in which our military shortcomings had been fully set forth. Some of our most highly educated soldiers had pronounced our organization to be entirely obsolete, our drill to be much the same as it was in the days of Sir John Moore, and in fact, our Army little better than an anachronism in the days of universal service, of the breech-loader and of long-ranging rifled guns.

The most intelligent of our young officers, and a few even of the ablest seniors, called loudly for reforms, and the press in general backed them up and thus obtained a hearing in Parliament for the proposals they could not otherwise have hoped for.

Mr. Cardwell's private secretary was an old and highly esteemed comrade of mine, then Major, now General, Sir Robert Biddulph. A very able man, well read upon all military subjects, who had seen much active service in the

## GENERAL SIR ROBERT BIDDULPH

Crimea, during the Indian Mutiny and in China, he was a man who thought, and was certainly one of the best soldiers all round I ever knew. He understood our Army thoroughly, and was fully alive to its backwardness in all that goes to make up military efficiency. He was of the utmost use to Mr. Cardwell at a time when that great War Minister had determined to abolish the Purchase System, to reform the Army and bring it up to a level with modern requirements. The Secretary of State for War who has a soldier of such ability and experience as his private secretary is indeed fortunate, whilst he who has a civilian or a second rate officer in that capacity is just the reverse. Indeed the inferior soldier is the more dangerous man in that position, because he is likely to have weight with his civilian master and to lead him astray upon military points, whereas no one suspects the civilian private secretary of knowing more about Army matters than the War Minister does himself.

I often went then to the House of Commons to listen to the debates on this subject, and to be at hand in case Mr. Cardwell should want information upon any unexpected point that might be sprung upon him by a soldier Member with which he might not happen to be fully acquainted. It was interesting for me as a party-politics hater to watch the shifts and ruses resorted to by those who objected to Mr. Cardwell's proposed changes. Their arguments, though sometimes flimsy, were specious, and often amusing. But Mr. Cardwell had so thoroughly absorbed the ins and outs of all the important points bearing upon the question, that he seldom had recourse to my aid upon such occasions. Personally I became much attached to him, as I think all were who knew him well. I always thought he keenly felt the unmerited, the unworthy, abuse that was heaped upon him

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

by what is commonly known as "Society." Mothers with stupid soldier sons denounced him as bent upon destroying the Army which our Great Duke had bequeathed us. The way in which he was generally held up to derision was not creditable to the intelligence of those concerned. The foreigner who did not know how absolutely ignorant society was upon Army matters, might have imagined that Mr. Cardwell had some personal interest in the measures he carried out : else why should he pursue a line of policy that all the Field-M Marshals and old Generals denounced—including even Indian generals, who knew but little of our Army ?

It cannot be too much impressed upon those who are anxious for information upon the subject, that in all Mr. Cardwell did then, he acted, not upon political, but upon purely and essentially national and military grounds. He soon came to realize that we could not hope to have a thoroughly efficient Army as long as the illogical Purchase System was allowed to bar the way to all useful Army reforms. Indeed, the first, the biggest and most serious of all our Army fights at this period was over its "abolition." As a system, it was not only the most objectionable and glaring of our military anachronisms, but in times of peace it blocked every avenue to the advancement of merit. Its abolition was opposed with all the ignorance so often displayed by our soldiers in Parliament. My old campaigning chum, the Hon. Augustus Anson, a man of great intelligence and a first rate soldier, was one of those who opposed its abolition to the bitter end. He was strenuously helped by his very able brother-in-law, the present Lord Wemyss, by almost all the old retired Army officers, and by a large majority of those still serving. Fortunately for the Army it was carried through Parliament successfully, and the great principle of

## OUR INTELLIGENCE DEPARTMENT

selection for all promotions soon followed. This was Mr. Cardwell's first military achievement, and it merits the remembrance and gratitude of all soldiers and of every one who desires to see our Army efficient.

This measure cost the country a large lump sum of money, and it imposed a considerable increase in annual Army expenditure for many years afterwards. And yet, it was planned and successfully carried out by the most economical of Governments, and by about the greatest economy-loving member in that Government, because he felt assured that until the Army was repurchased, as it were, from the officers who had bought their positions in its ranks, it never could be made the thoroughly efficient force the nation wanted.

Our Intelligence Department at that time possessed several remarkable men who devoted their best energies to help forward Army Reform. Of them no one worked to better advantage or with greater zeal than my old valued friend and loyal comrade Captain T. Jessop, of the Scots Greys. An able, clever man all round, full of energy and of bright, modern views. A good, hard-working man of business—that best of qualifications for a staff officer—free from prejudice and of a most liberal turn of mind. Another was Captain Evelyn Baring, now Lord Cromer, the well-known British representative, I must not say ruler, in Egypt. He was an indefatigable worker, and one of the very ablest, strongest and most determined men I ever knew or did business with. He helped materially in carrying out many of our most needed Army Reforms at the time I write of.

Many other able soldiers helped Lord Cardwell in his difficult task, amongst whom were Sir Patrick MacDougall, Sir George Colley, Sir Edward Bulwer, Sir Henry Brackenbury, and Sir Frederick Maurice. In all possible ways they

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helped forward the new military system Mr. Cardwell was toiling to create. But all this opposition in Parliament and elsewhere to Mr. Cardwell's proposed changes brought down much obloquy upon the Government, and several of its supporters would, I think, at one time have gladly seen the matter dropped.

I have always believed that the mental strain thus imposed upon Mr. Cardwell was too great for him, and that the brain disease from which he died some years afterwards was the result of the worry, work, abuse and anxiety he then underwent at the hands of men who did not understand modern warfare or its requirements. I hope we shall never forget that it is to his courage, firmness and wisdom we owe our present Army. It is by no means what it might have been and what it still requires to be made, but let the reader imagine, if he can, how we could have met the recent Boer invasion of our colonies if Mr. Cardwell had never reformed our Army and made it even as good as it is. He it was who wisely provided us with the reserve of trained soldiers and the large army of trained auxiliary forces which enabled us to bring that strangely long drawn out war to a fairly successful issue.

## CHAPTER XLIII

### The Ashantee War of 1873-4

**T**HE story of my campaign against Ashantee in 1873-4, is, for many reasons, full of interest for me, and perhaps my readers may find some pleasure in the following brief description of it.

I shall make no attempt to relate the history of our early relations with Ashantee. It would be of little interest, and would certainly neither redound to the credit of our arms nor to the intelligence of our home Ministers. It is not easy to define the immediate cause of every war we have waged on the West Coast of Africa. We may, however, truthfully assert that most of them grew out of our abolition of the Slave Trade. As the King of Ashantee's revenue, which had been considerable, was chiefly derived from the sale of slaves captured in his frequent wars, he was naturally furious with us for having thus deprived him of his market for them. This had made him in the years immediately preceding our war all the more anxious to secure Elmina or some other place on the sea where he could in safety sell his prisoners to slave-owning states.

The history of all our dealings with the Ashantees tells us that whenever our Governor of the Gold Coast made any move that showed signs of weakness, trouble with Koomassee invariably followed. The cowardly policy we

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

pursued in 1807 led to the Ashantee invasion of 1811: the Ashantee inroad in 1823 was the result of our buying off that enemy in 1817, and the fact that we did not attempt to avenge Sir Charles MacCarthy's defeat in 1824, had brought the enemy to the very walls of our coast forts.

As we made no attempt to take vengeance for this overwhelming defeat, the Koomassee Sovereign and his warlike people naturally assumed we were afraid of them. Was not the possession of our general's skull amongst their war trophies, upon which the King swore his most solemn oaths, a lasting evidence that we dared not meet them again in battle? King Koffee Kalcali—their king in 1873—brought up to consider himself the greatest of monarchs and his soldiers irresistible—believed he could afford to treat us with contempt, and even to ill-use and murder our native subjects.

When the Ashantees had invaded our territory in 1863 and attacked the tribes under our protection, we unwisely stationed a West Indian regiment at Prahsu for several months. The operations, badly devised and worse executed, ended in terrible sickness and loss of life before we had made any useful impression upon the enemy. The details of this discreditable failure so horrified the English world at the time, that the Government—held responsible for it—was nearly turned out of office in consequence. It is not surprising, therefore, that Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet, ten years later, should have dreaded what our projected expedition might have in store for them.

Early in 1873 a mail steamer from the Gold Coast brought home the alarming news that an Ashantee army of about 12,000 soldiers, under the command of Prince Menza, King



## ASHANTEES INVADE PROTECTORATE

Koffee's brother, had crossed the Prah in January to invade and lay waste our protectorate.<sup>1</sup> It was said to be the largest army that had ever left Koomassee. Our West Coast authorities do not seem to have attached much importance to this event, and consequently little was done in the way of military preparations to meet the impending attack until about the middle of the year. Our governor then reported the enemy to be within twenty-four hours' march of Cape Coast Castle, and that the Fantee population could not be induced to face them. In fact, the invaders were allowed to remain for about half the year in undisturbed possession of the greater part of our protectorate. Besides the Gold Coast towns we only held Dunquah, on the Prahsu-Koomassee road, which we had occupied with some Houssas early that year, and where we had ordered the fighting men of the native tribes to assemble. But in April the latter were defeated, and could never afterwards be induced to meet their old enemies, although King Koffee's army made little use of the victory. It did not attempt to approach Cape Coast Castle, but moved towards Elmina, covering as it advanced a large area in order to find food, which is never plentiful in that forest country.

We had recently acquired Elmina from the Dutch, but its king, who was anti-English, had sworn his "great oath" to join the Ashantee invaders when they reached his territory, and other neighbouring potentates were said to have followed his example. Although the enemy's march was slow and deliberate, Elmina was soon invested. Fortunately for England, it was then held by a small party of marines, bluejackets, and West Indian soldiers under

<sup>1</sup> This army was said to have taken five days in crossing the Prah, having but two ferry boats that carried only thirty men each.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Colonel Festing of the Royal Marines, and Lieutenant Wells of the Royal Navy. With this feeble garrison they drove back the enemy with loss in June, 1873, and the place was saved. Death overtook the gallant Wells at his post, and of the marine garrison twenty-seven died, and the fever-stricken remainder had to be sent home.

Throughout this war Colonel Festing did the State right good service. A brave gentleman, a cool and daring soldier, he inspired general confidence, and it was by his skilful use of the small force at his disposal that we were able to hold our own both at Elmina and at Cape Coast Castle throughout the summer and autumn of 1873. He was well supported by the senior naval officer of the station, Captain Fremantle, a man of indefatigable energy, great experience and much ability, if I may venture to use such terms in relation to one who is now a distinguished Admiral of the Fleet.

After their repulse the Ashantee army fell back to a position some ten miles inland, near Mampon, and to the north-west of Cape Coast Castle. Its presence there, however, served to keep the protectorate in a constant state of alarm, for no one could say when the whole Ashantee nation might not swoop down upon our coast settlements. Indeed, when they did attack our Fantee levies in the following June, those cowards fled with their women and children to Cape Coast Castle for protection.

In September the Administrator of the Gold Coast urged Colonel Festing to attack the enemy's camp at Mampon without waiting for reinforcements from home. Amongst other reasons for pressing this course upon him, it was alleged that our inaction was injurious to our fighting reputation amongst our own tribes. A weak man might

## LORD KIMBERLEY

have given way against his better judgement to such an appeal from a civil governor, but Colonel Festing wisely refused to undertake any such risky operation.

As we made no move the invaders grew bolder, until in June, 1873, as already related, they even ventured to attack Elmina. Though effectively repulsed in the attempt, they showed no signs of retiring within their own frontiers. They merely fell back to take up a threatening position further inland. In this condition of affairs it became very evident to Lord Kimberley that all hope of making any definite and lasting peace with the Ashantee king until his army had been utterly defeated was merely the wild dream of timid men, who neither understood the haughty character of the Ashantee people nor the abject cowardice of the Fantees, who constituted the Queen's subjects in the "protectorate."

As might be expected from a very warlike, proud and barbarous people, our having left them unpunished for their invasion of our territory was attributed to cowardice. Such pusillanimous conduct caused them to believe we were afraid of so great a king and of so great a nation.

Such a condition of things always means war sooner or later, but when the nature of the Gold Coast climate is remembered it is easy to understand why the home Government elected to postpone making it as long as possible. But at the same time, it must, I think, be admitted as a broad fact that we have generally owed our troubles in those regions to the halting, changeable and timid policy—dictated from Downing Street—that we followed in dealing with this nation of warriors. Lord Kimberley, then Minister for the Colonies, who knew the history of our former relations with that formidable military power,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

now insisted upon prompt measures being taken to put an end once and for ever to this intolerable condition of affairs. Working conjointly with Mr. Cardwell—a former Colonial Minister who thoroughly understood the Gold Coast history—they decided to make a soldier Governor of our Gold Coast territory.

Mr. Cardwell had in confidence already informed me that he would like me to go there should it be determined to undertake active operations against the invading Ashantees. In numerous Blue Books, and in piles of confidential correspondence between local governors and the Colonial Office, I had consequently made a careful study of the subject, and had perused all the available works which bore upon the geography and history of the region in question. I there learnt that military operations upon the Gold Coast cannot be begun with safety until about the end of November or the beginning of December, nor can they be prolonged without inordinate risk much beyond the end of February. In other words, for whatever eventualities I might deem it essential to provide, my operations must be planned so as to fit well within those three months. It required some fertility of imagination to make any useful forecast as to the development of a problem in which the idiosyncrasies of an absolute negro ruler, like the King of Ashantee, formed an important factor. I submitted privately to Mr. Cardwell the rough outline of a military scheme which if vigorously carried out would, I believed, enable us to destroy the military power of the Ashantees, and thereby secure peace to the people of our West Coast settlements for at least a long period. The rough outline of the scheme was, that I should proceed there as soon as possible and assume the government of all

## PLAN OF OPERATIONS

our settlements in that part of the world ; that I should be allowed to take with me a number of carefully selected officers for the purpose of raising an efficient native force, if that were possible, and that with it I should do my best to drive back the Ashantee invaders beyond the River Prah and secure our possessions from future attack. But, I added, that all the information I had gathered on the subject made me think it would be impossible to accomplish what was wanted without the assistance of white troops, as it was tolerably evident the Fantees would not face their old and dreaded enemies the Ashantees unless thus backed up. I said the Government might rely on it that I would do my best to avoid the terrible necessity of having to employ our soldiers in such a climate, but that I deemed it to be absolutely essential to have two <sup>1</sup> first rate battalions told off and specially equipped for a campaign beyond the Prah should I send home to say I could not fulfil my mission without their help.

My plan was to make a good road to the Prah River and erect suitable shelters for those white battalions at selected halting places along it : that, when everything was ready, I should land them, and having collected my fighting forces on that river push forward the remaining seventy or eighty miles to Koomassee with all speed, and if possible make peace there with King Koffee. If he would not do this, I would destroy his palaces, burn his capital and lay waste his country as well as I could, and with the least possible delay send back the British troops to their transports, which I should have waiting for them on the coast.

My study of our past relations with the Ashantees drove

<sup>1</sup> I subsequently increased this number to three battalions which the Government agreed to.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

home into my mind the conviction that until we had utterly defeated their army and taken Koomassee, we should never have any assured peace in our West African settlements. Until we had actually marched an army into Koomassee, the natives of all tribes and races would continue to believe that if we dared to push forward beyond the River Prah we should be exterminated. This belief did exist, and was the chief cause of my subsequent difficulty in obtaining carriers who would work beyond that river. All the West African natives far and near believed the Ashantees to be irresistible in battle, and I confess they found reason for that belief in the history of all our previous dealings with Koomassee and its rulers. It is always a source of serious danger to have on your frontiers a fighting race of savages imbued with this firm belief in their own irresistible strength. In this instance, that axiom was strengthened by our having recently allowed the Ashantees to cross into our protectorate and to kill or carry off into slavery the inhabitants of whole villages.

Accustomed to the bush, in which they could move about as they liked, it never seems to have occurred to the illogical mind of the Ashantees that we could do so equally well if only we had the courage to face them. The dark, thick and tangled forest in which they lived was to them but as the Surrey Commons might be to us, a species of country to be manœuvred through as an ordinary military exercise. They consequently attributed our repugnance to penetrate its recesses to our fear of so redoubtable an enemy. I soon found that this belief was not confined to those who had lived beyond the Prah, but was freely shared by all the kings and people of our protectorate.

Since Sir Charles MacCarthy's defeat in 1823, all punitive

## WAR DEALINGS WITH THE NATIVES

attacks upon recalcitrant native rulers had devolved almost exclusively upon our ships of war. These little expeditions on the West Coast were liked by the officers and ships' crews, and the Navy had come to regard them as exclusively their business.

In all local troubles with the coast chiefs or kings whose towns could be reached by our ships' guns, the usual course was as follows : The matter was reported by the governor to the senior naval officer, and, as a punitive measure, he was requested to open fire upon the collection of mud huts which constituted the capital of the recalcitrant potentate. This he at once proceeded to do. It was a simple operation ; the town named was quickly and easily reduced to ashes by our shells, and the inhabitants fled for safety to the neighbouring bush. When we had thus, as it was understood, vindicated the offended honour of England, our ships of war disappeared, and the villagers returned to their burnt homes to bury those who had been killed and to restore the thatched roofs of their mud houses. It was a cheap, rough-and-ready mode of bringing home for the moment to the minds of all negro rulers on the coast the greatness of the White Sovereign beyond the ocean who claimed them as her subjects. The penalty inflicted was trifling, and in a few weeks nothing remained to show that the English had punished the offending chief. A full report of the proceedings was then forwarded to the Admiralty in a despatch, and " My Lords " expressed their unqualified approval of the way in which the affair had been disposed of. The whole performance was, in fact, eminently futile, and as it probably involved killing some women and children, it was cruel also.

Remembering these facts it was but natural that some

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

naval officers should have regretted deeply that the settlement of our Ashantee difficulty should not have been left entirely to the Admiralty. There was also perhaps another reason why my appointment should not find favour there. The Colonial Office had already sent out Captain Glover, R.N., to the valley of the River Volta with a sort of roving commission, in the hope that his operations there might bring the Ashantee King to reason. It was not, therefore, far-fetched to imagine that naval officers might think it was scarcely fair to Captain Glover to call in a soldier before his scheme had been given a trial, and to entrust that soldier with the supreme direction of all the military and political affairs in the coming war.

Captain Glover had left England in August, 1873, for our territory in the Volta Basin. Boundaries in those regions were then very undefined, indeed, as far as I know, the only actual surveys of any portion of our protectorate are those made by the officers who went with me to Koomasse. The most important paragraph of Captain Glover's instructions—as I understood them—was, that “the great object of his mission was to create such a diversion on the flank and rear of the Ashantees as might force them to retreat from the protectorate, or at all events to so far harass and alarm them as to enable an attack to be made on them in front with better prospect of success.”<sup>1</sup>

But notwithstanding that paragraph in his instructions it always seemed to me that, looking far ahead beyond that “great object,” his chief aspiration was to open out a new, an easy route for trade into the interior of Africa

<sup>1</sup> “Colonial Office Instructions of August 18 to Captain Glover as our Special Commissioner to the friendly native chiefs in the eastern districts of the Protected Territories near and adjacent to our Settlements on the Gold Coast.”



## MEETING AT THE WAR OFFICE

by the hitherto unexplored Volta Valley. It was a grand idea well worthy of so far-seeing, so determined an explorer, and I regret beyond measure that it has never been seriously undertaken. But it was not the object of the mission upon which I was sent. I thought then, and still believe, that until I had sent him positive orders to cross the Prah on January 15 and to march upon Koomassee with all the forces at his disposal, he had regarded the destruction of the Ashantee military power as a mere episode in the much grander and more ambitious scheme he had always before him. But that scheme would require some years to carry out, whereas the object of my mission was definite, namely, to secure peace to our protectorate by the destruction of the Ashantee military power before the next unhealthy season had set in.

On August 13 there was a meeting at the War Office of Ministers and high military and naval authorities. I was sent for and asked if, with my knowledge of affairs upon the Gold Coast, I would undertake the direction of the civil and military affairs there. I was told, that if I said "yes," I should not be expected to remain there after I had settled matters with King Koffee Kalcali. I at once assented—Heavens, with what internal joy I did so! A messenger was forthwith sent to Osborne to obtain Her Majesty's consent, and two days later it was announced in all the London papers that I was to leave for West Africa immediately. The Cabinet were, I think, anxious to make publicly known their determination to deal quickly and drastically with this Ashantee question, and to let the world learn that they were already busy in preparing for war should it be forced upon them. Other somewhat similar meetings took place subsequently in

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Mr. Cardwell's room. They interested me much, for I had never before heard Ministers discuss amongst themselves questions of Imperial policy. Those whom I then heard debate the serious question of whether a military force should or should not be sent to the Gold Coast, were able and experienced statesmen. I did not expect them to know much of war, or of its difficulties, from a military point of view, but I did imagine there would have been a unanimity of opinion as to the evident necessity for going to war. At one of these meetings, a Minister who was present, put several pertinent questions, which his colleague of the Colonial Office answered, I thought, in a somewhat sharp tone of voice. I may have been wrong, but I fancied that the questions reflected naval sentiment at the Admiralty. At least that was my impression at the time.

Some questions and answers passed between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and another Minister who was present as to what it was hoped or intended to do under many contingencies. Lord Kimberley's temper became apparently somewhat nettled under his colleague's cross-examination until at last, in reply to some inquiry, he thumped the table in front of him and said in a determined voice, "Either this expedition comes off or I cease to be Colonial Minister." This emphatic reply astonished me not a little, but it had what I presume was its intended effect, for it ended the discussion, and the despatch of the expedition was agreed to.

Mr. Cardwell, who did not seem to enjoy this somewhat open exchange of views between colleagues, brought the meeting to a close, pouring oil upon the troubled waters with that mild determination of manner which was a prom-

## THE WAR DECIDED UPON

inent feature in his character. The die was cast, and the general plan of campaign was to be on the lines I had proposed. I was to have the invaluable advantage of being not only Military Chief, but also governor of the territories which constituted or bordered upon the seat of war. Upon the general line of policy to be followed I received fairly clear instructions, but much was wisely left to my discretion. The fact that the Government thus trusted me I attributed to Mr. Cardwell's experience as Colonial Minister in a former Administration, which had taught him the desirability of concentrating in one man's hands both the civil and military power when war is imminent in any of our distant possessions.

To compare a small with a great affair upon such a point, let the reader contrast the history of Sir John Moore's remarkable campaign in Spain with the history of this little war. The comparison will illustrate clearly how marked is the advantage to the nation when the home Government is wise enough to entrust the Commander in the field with the responsibility of what I may call the local diplomacy of the war as well as with the direction of the military operations undertaken to secure the great national objects aimed at.

Our history teems with useful warnings upon this point, as for instance in the Low Countries, where the Dutch Deputies with Marlborough's army were allowed to influence and in some instance to control the plans and movements of that great general. The story of those two wars warns us never again to send a civilian commissioner into the theatre of war to exercise any authority over the general commanding the troops employed.

In the official letter informing me that I had been selected

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

to command the forces and to assume the civil administration of the Gold Coast, Mr. Cardwell wound up by impressing upon me that "nothing but a conviction of necessity would induce Her Majesty's Government to engage in any operations involving the possibility of its requiring the service of Europeans at the Gold Coast."

Upon me was thus thrown the responsibility of forming an opinion on the spot whether the necessities of the position did or did not require the employment of British troops in the coming campaign, whilst the Cabinet reserved to itself the final decision of whether they would or would not furnish such troops if I asked for them.

I think it might be safely asserted that at the beginning of 1873 not five per cent. of the English people had ever heard of the Ashantee kingdom. I might as truthfully add, that out of every thousand of such enlightened beings, very few indeed knew much about its geography or its history. The world in general had a sort of vague undefined notion that in the days when we recognized domestic slavery in our colonies its king dealt largely in human flesh with the slave traders: and furthermore, that the Ashantee nation was known to be the most warlike in the region, and had not hesitated upon several occasions to invade the white man's territory, and even to attack his fortified castles which had been erected in the slave-dealers' interests. The Dutch and the Portuguese held some of these castles. Elmina, formerly Dutch, had recently become British, a circumstance which many ignorantly thought had brought about this war. To the English of 1873 who knew something more of West Africa than what is learnt from school geography, the Ashantees were associated with the serious defeat they had inflicted upon us about fifteen

## LORD KIMBERLEY

miles inland just half a century before, as already mentioned. Upon that occasion our native allies bolted soon after the first volley, and the native army we had trusted to stem the Ashantee invasion followed their example, leaving to his fate their general, who was also the governor of our Cape Coast possessions.

Whilst our preparations for this campaign were in progress, I heard many say, "Why not abandon the Gold Coast altogether? It can be no longer worth our while to spend money upon a country whose climate is deadly to us and which must always be a source of worry and danger?"

Peace-loving as Lord Kimberley undoubtedly was, he took no such small churchwarden view of our Imperial responsibilities, and I presume he had induced Mr. Gladstone to see the matter in a similar light. Both he and Mr. Cardwell were devoted to peace, but neither would, according to my estimate of their characters, have shrunk from war when it had become in their opinion a national necessity. In this instance both were satisfied that we could not avoid it with any shred of national dignity, nor with any honest care for the future. Lord Kimberley, though a very able man and a strong Colonial Minister, was a great talker. His idea of a conversation upon an important business resolved itself into a long and able monologue. When he had exhausted the subject—and sometimes his listener also—he would shake him by the hand, say the conversation (!) had been most useful and instructive, and that he was much obliged for the interview.

How shall I describe Mr. Cardwell, the greatest Minister I ever served with at the War Office? He was the only civilian Secretary of State I ever knew who understood

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

what military administration meant, or who had any fixed ideas of the principles upon which an army should be organized for rapid mobilization. It was a pleasure to work with so able a statesman, and one could always trust him implicitly. To him we owe the abolition of purchase and the establishment of our present military system. Knowing what a large army that system recently enabled us to send to South Africa, I feel we can never as a nation be sufficiently grateful to his memory. But he never could have carried out his reforms in the face of the howling opposition they met with from what is commonly known as "society," and also from the Army with its thousand ramifications amongst the "better classes," had it not been that Mr. Gladstone reposed implicit confidence in the wisdom and discretion of his old and firm friend, Edward Cardwell. To Mr. Gladstone all Army questions were uncongenial. But he understood in a very general way that the system which allowed, say, a stupid major to jump over the head of a clever senior because the former could, and the latter could not, afford to pay a few thousand pounds for the promotion, must be an absurdity, an injustice to individuals and such a serious injury to the State that it could not be defended with any show of reason. But if he would not study Army questions himself, he believed so thoroughly in his friend's good sense, calm and logical judgement, upon questions which he knew Mr. Cardwell had studied thoroughly, that without hesitation he accepted his advice, and placed Army Reform high in the political programme of his party.

Except those who worked with and for Mr. Cardwell few know the difficulties he had to overcome when all "society," and almost the whole Army, was against him.

## CONSTANT UNPREPAREDNESS FOR WAR

Honest, straightforward, able, clear-sighted and determined, full of amiable qualities, he carried out the herculean task he had resolved to attempt, but the effort killed him. Never was Minister in my time more generally hated by the Army and by almost all its old-fashioned and unthinking officers. And yet, looking back now over the quarter of a century we have since lived through, I can think of no one man whose memory and whose great services entitle him to be remembered with such gratitude by all ranks of the Army, by the nation, aye, and by the Empire at large. What misfortune such a War Minister would have recently saved us !

The public are very justly angry that we had not all the stores required for the mobilization of our army when Mr. Kruger declared war. But for the fact that we were able to find the great number of trained men we did, we are certainly indebted to the army system which Mr. Cardwell created in the teeth of the direst and most influential opposition that any great public measure ever encountered in my time.

When will the people realize that they must never hope to have an Army ready for rapid mobilization under our present Army system ? We are never allowed to keep in store the war-plant required for that object. After a war, our War Ministers prefer to live for years upon the military stores purchased during its progress. To provide for future contingencies is not a dogma of party Government. The reason is evident.

## CHAPTER XLIV

### War Service on the Gold Coast, 1873-4

WE had been assured by many who professed to know the West Coast of Africa well, that whilst our Fantee allies were only remarkable for their cowardice, the Ashantees were irresistible demons whom no neighbouring tribes would face. Indeed, if gloomy forebodings could have prevented the expedition I should never have seen Koomassee. The newspapers teemed with letters describing the difficulties to be overcome and the impossibility of any British troops ever reaching that city. That dreadful creature, "One Who Knows," and those twin brothers, "The Man on The Spot" and "The Man who has Been There," all whined in chorus as dogs do at the ringing of a church bell. The croakings of some were even couched in terms that read more like the menace, "undertake it at your peril and if you dare" than friendly advice to their countrymen in a difficult position. The warning, "Mene, mene, tekel upharsin," was not more emphatic than the gloomy prognostics these false prophets shrieked at all who presumed to differ from them. An engineer officer of high position who had served on the Gold Coast, upon being asked by a friend what he had better take with him there in the shape of "kit," replied, "A coffin; it is all you will require." Many had what our American friends



## DEADLINESS OF THE CLIMATE

would designate "axes to grind" on their own behalf, and were furious because they were not allowed to start some impossible railroad to the Prah, or other wild plans of their own conception. If we attempted to march poor ignorant English soldiers through that dense and deadly bush we should be—it was asserted—lured into traps from which not even one would escape to describe what had befallen the rest.

These prophets of evil assumed the attitude one might expect from Cassandra mourning over the folly of those who refused to listen to her warnings. Such, however, are the vagaries of this class of human beings that each and all of those who denounced our folly and our sin for presuming to undertake what they had pronounced impossible were quite willing to undertake the job if the Government would entrust them with it. That was the weak side of their sermons upon the pestilential climate of Ashantee, and it stamped the preachers, not only as illogical but as tainted with personal interest. When I left England the troops upon the Gold Coast were the 2nd West India Regiment, and very small detachments of the marines, in all thirty officers and 770 rank and file. Of them, one officer and 146 were sick. It was appalling to find that of the 130 Englishmen ashore, only twenty-two were fit for duty. It was not, therefore, to be wondered at that Ministers should have long hesitated to embark in a war for which their military advisers required the services of British troops who would most probably suffer in like proportion.

The day before I left London to embark at Liverpool, there had been read to me an extract from a letter written by Mr. Cardwell to a high official, in which he said of me : " It only remains now to hope that he will have the moral

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

courage, if there be impossibilities in his way, to look them fairly in the face, to report them accurately, and leave us"—meaning the Cabinet—"to take upon ourselves the responsibility of dealing with them. Bad as such a conclusion would be, yet if it be based upon truth it must be accepted." I was assured at the time of the confidence Mr. Cardwell and the Cabinet generally reposed in me, which was very gratifying.

I was allowed to select whatever officers I required for the native regiments it was my intention to raise locally, and also those whom I wanted for staff duties. It was evident that the most serious enemy to be encountered was the climate, usually considered the worst in all our foreign possessions. The majority of those I selected for these duties were Staff College officers which in itself was a new departure in such matters. I do not believe that any general ever left England with an abler or more daring body of assistants than I did upon that occasion.

The steamship *Ambroz*, in which my party of thirty-five carefully selected officers embarked at Liverpool on September 12, 1873, was the most abominable and unhealthy craft I ever made a voyage in. The smell of bilge water and of bad new paint with which she reeked poisoned several of us, and the inmates of any workhouse would have complained of the food. But these, as I have said, were small matters to men full, as we all were, of hope, ambition and energy. Many whom we left behind regarded us as foolhardy idiots who having rashly volunteered for a hopeless venture they never expected to see again. But these sadly coloured pictures of what was in store for us had no effect upon the spirits of my tireless companions, men for whom danger seemed to have a strong attraction.

## MY COMPANIONS ON THE VOYAGE

All were young—I, their leader, one of the oldest of the group, was only forty, and all laughed at danger and made light of trials. Though fully conscious of the difficulties to be met and overcome, no party on pleasure bent was ever gayer or apparently more light-hearted. What is it you cannot accomplish with men well chosen from our Army!

The general longing of my party to face the horrors they were told of, and to meet an enemy thus described, made all feel like comrades who had volunteered for some forlorn hope. Any contemplation of impending trials served only to whet our zest for the enterprise in which all had so gladly embarked. Gloomy thoughts were stifled in the daily discussions of plans for overcoming the difficulties we expected to encounter, and this community of aims and ambitions made us firm comrades, a true "band of brothers," full of joy and hope at the prospect before us. A longing for distinction, to do something that those at home would think well of, filled our cup of pleasure to the brim. All other considerations were thrown overboard; they were at least ignored if not forgotten. If care weighed upon any heart it was well hidden away, and there seemed to burn in every one that determination which mocks at all danger that has to be encountered. Life on board ship is usually spent in silly games, idleness and sleep, but no body of adventurers was ever more, if as studious as we were during the voyage. When it ended all could, I think, have passed with credit an examination in the geography of the country we expected to campaign in. Piles of Blue Books containing years of correspondence between Downing Street and our governors in Western Africa, were closely examined for information as to recent

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

events, and all works upon its early history were eagerly devoured.

To while away the monotony of reading Blue Books, I asked Captains Brackenbury and Huyishe to give lectures upon our relations with the protected tribes and Ashantees, the circumstances which led to the war, and the topography of the country which was to be our theatre of war. Both lectures were very instructive and focussed in a small compass all that was known upon those subjects.

Twenty-nine eventful years have come and gone since then, and as I look over the list of able and gallant men who were my companions, my helpmates in the "adventure," what memories their names bring before me! Some were killed in action, others, full of youth and hope, fell stricken by the deadly pestilence which rages by day and by night in the dense and deadly forests between the sea and Koomassee. But I am proud to say a large proportion of the survivors have since then written their names clearly upon the pages of our national history.

I felt that ordinary men could not be good enough for the work I had undertaken. I was fully aware of its many peculiar difficulties, and had taken care to surround myself with those whom I could trust, and whom I felt had a similar confidence in me. Several of them had accompanied me three years before in my expedition from Lake Superior to the Red River settlement. Those were men whose nerve I had seen proved in the midst of physical dangers which silence the man of ordinary manufacture, and blanch many a cheek. I knew I could rely upon them in the "tightest" of places, and that no risk of any sort would appal them. Captain, now General, Sir Redvers Buller, of the Royal Rifles, was first and foremost amongst them

## THE MEN OF MY STAFF

as one whose stern determination of character nothing could ruffle, whose resource in difficulty was not surpassed by any one I ever knew. Endowed with a mind fruitful in expedients, cool and calm in the face of every danger, he inspired general confidence, and thoroughly deserved it. Had a thunderbolt burst at his feet he would have merely brushed from his rifle jacket the earth it had thrown upon him without any break in the sentence he happened to be uttering at the moment. He was a thorough soldier, a practised woodman, a skilful boatman in the most terrifying of rapids, and a man of great physical strength and endurance.

My chief of the staff was Lieut.-Col. John McNeill, who had also shared in the hard work of the Red River expedition. Daring, determined, self-confident and indefatigable, he was not a man I should have liked to meet as my enemy in action. He was a first-rate man to organize success under difficult conditions. He was never cast down by bad luck, and always cheery no matter how discouraging might be the immediate or apparent prospect of the position. He was badly hit in our first affair of any marked importance. I was standing beside a gun, then in action, when he came out of the bush near it, supporting one horribly wounded arm with the other, and exclaimed in angry and indignant tones, as if someone had deeply insulted him, "An infernal scoundrel out there has shot me through the arm." All the muscles, tendons and sinews of his wrist had been cut through by a bullet fired close to him, and stood out like strands of an unravelled rope's end, causing me to think in my surgical ignorance that a man so wounded must die of lockjaw: this is an old Army superstition regarding wounds of that nature.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

All thought of the pain, which must have been great, was swallowed up in his sheer anger at being thus knocked over in our first affair, and thus cut off from all chance of seeing the war through. This bespoke his character thoroughly, and I mention it because it was this feeling which, animating the officers who took part in the campaign, enabled me to finish it so quickly and satisfactorily.

My medical adviser having told me not to reckon upon McNeill for the coming campaign, I at once sent home for Colonel Greaves to succeed him as chief of the staff, with the duties of which position he was thoroughly well acquainted. Indeed, he knew our Army, its regulations, and customs better than any one I ever served with. A clever and determined man, of iron will and tireless energy, he was daring to a fault, with strong opinions—I might even add prejudices—he understood both the science and the art of his profession. A good sportsman, strong and healthy in body and resolute in mind, he was intended to be the right hand to a leader possessing a spirit and aspirations congenial to his own. Indeed no general could have had a better man at his side, and no one was ever better or more ably served than I was by him.

My military secretary was Captain Henry Brackenbury, and my private secretary Lieutenant Frederick Maurice. Both were artillerymen and strangers to me at the time, but I chose them as men remarkable for their ability, and because both were thoroughly well versed in the science of their profession. The former is not only a profound reasoner with a strong will and a logical mind, but—that rare man to find in our Army—a first-rate man of business and an indefatigable worker also. Whatever he undertakes he performs admirably and thoroughly. Had he

## SIR HENRY BRACKENBURY

adopted some less noble but more paying occupation in life than the Army he would have made a fortune. He spoke remarkably well, and had he made politics his career, I have no doubt he would have risen to a very high position in that questionable trade. Had he never accomplished anything else for the State than the great services he rendered England throughout our recent and curiously prolonged war in South Africa, he might indeed be well satisfied with what he had done for his country. I do not know an officer who could have performed equally well the heavy and responsible duties which fell to his lot at the War Office during the last three years. England was indeed fortunate to possess so able and untiring a soldier-administrator when Messrs. Kruger and Company forced war upon us, for as usual—as has been, and always must be the case under our unbusinesslike War Office system—we were unprepared for war upon any large scale.

It is not so easy to describe my staunch old friend General Sir Frederick Maurice. His fervid imagination and brilliant intellect, helped by a deep study of strategy and an inexhaustible amount of stored-up military information, marks him out as one of our great military thinkers and best writers upon the science and art of war. The son of a man whose brain power and whose manly courage he has inherited, he would have distinguished himself in whatever walk of life he adopted. As a lieutenant in 1872, he was the successful competitor for the Wellington Prize Essay upon War. His essay was far above those of the other competitors, of whom I was one. When I selected him to be one of my officers in the Ashantee War, I only knew him as the man who had so easily beaten me upon that occasion, but I felt that the man who possessed the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

thinking and reasoning power which his essay displayed should be given the chance of adding practice to precept. Since then we have been constant companions, both at home and in many campaigns, and I feel it a privilege to count him not only amongst my ablest and bravest comrades, but as one of my best friends.

My commanding Royal Engineer was Captain R. Home, in many ways one of the most remarkable men I have ever known. I had been acquainted with him for several years, and picked him out as being just the man I wanted for that position in the trying and difficult work before us. I never had cause in any way to regret my selection. This was his first campaign, and no one strove harder to make it a success, though all those around me did as much. An able, daring and imaginative Irishman, he was full of resource. Inclined to be egotistical and somewhat vain of his great talents, he had an ineradicable repugnance to admit he was unable to give detailed answers to all questions, on all subjects, whether great or small, that any one put to him. This failing caused him to be at times a somewhat unsafe guide. But as this peculiarity was well known to his comrades—who sometimes practised amusingly upon it—it did not interfere with his great and undoubted usefulness. It was during this little war that he laid the foundation of the high opinion so generally entertained of him ever after by all those who knew him best. He died five years later, broken down, as I believe, by the strain of a too long continued over-taxing of his great mental and physical powers in the public service. By his death the Queen lost one of her very ablest soldiers. The day his death was announced, a friend found Lord Beaconsfield in tears sitting over his fire. To that friend, who told me the



## EVELYN WOOD AND BAKER RUSSELL

story, the great Minister said he had just lost, by Colonel Home's death, an officer of whose talents he had so good an opinion that he had long designed him for high and important employment.

Amongst the many keen soldiers around me, none worked more unremittingly, or with a noble daring more wisely governed by thoughtful prudence, than Lord Gifford. Throughout the whole advance beyond the River Prah he had charge of the scouts, with whom he lived and into whom he was almost able to infuse some real pluck. But yet upon occasions all bolted and left him, and how he lived through his many daily dangers and hair-breadth escapes was a wonder to everyone. Always well ahead of our advance posts, he had a hard time of it. But continuous danger, bad and scanty food, constant exposure in such a climate, no shelter from rain, and no white man as a companion, these were trials and drawbacks to comfort which had no effect upon him. If ever a man daily and hourly carried his life in his hand, he certainly did so until we reached Koomassee.

From the best fighting materials I could find at hand, I intended to raise two special battalions, one to be under Colonel Evelyn Wood; the other under Colonel Baker Russell. Both were able men, designed by their Maker to be dashing and excellent leaders. There was great rivalry between their respective battalions, and if by chance one came in for more fighting than the other, the less fortunate commander and his officers resented it, not only as a grievance, but as a slight. More than once I had to smooth down the ruffled feathers of each in turn. Their officers were all carefully selected men who I knew could be depended upon implicitly, under all circumstances.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

as the officers of our regiment were not accustomed to be placed under arrest. The old gentleman fumed, and at last ordered us to be released with a wiggling. This conduct on his part did not tend to harmony in the garrison, for after all, if any real or serious danger presented itself, it would mainly be upon us young gentlemen lately from the Crimea he would have to depend. Very improperly we all thenceforth disliked him and thought little of him as a soldier.

Our life when shut up with him in the Alum Bagh was extremely monotonous. From a battery at the "Yellow House," about 1,500 yards off, and situated near the suburbs of the city, we were daily saluted by some 32-pounder shot thrown in amongst our tents. Sometimes they struck the palace itself, and occasionally a horse or a gun-bullock was killed, but it is astonishing how little damage any such ill-directed and random fire ever does. It would have been very easy any morning at daybreak to take this battery which thus constantly annoyed us and occasionally caused us loss. But our old Highland Commandant would not sanction any such enterprise. His garrison was small, his sick and wounded in hospital were numerous, and he over-estimated the dangers of his position; at least we young soldiers thought so. He was urged by my commanding officer, Major Barnston—who understood war thoroughly—to let us take this battery at early dawn and spike its guns. We were then well into the cold weather, and just before daybreak at that season the sepoy is at his worst. Almost paralysed with cold, he is nearly torpid and good for very little. All ranks in those three companies of my regiment were young, and, as they had but lately served in the batteries before Sebastopol, they thought

## BESIEGED IN THE ALUM BAGH PALACE

little either of the feeble fire from this battery or of the sepoys who worked it. If permitted to attack it they would have made short work of both the battery and its garrison. But the commandant had been in India almost all his service ; he had seen next to nothing of war, and knew little of its ways ; besides, the sun had apparently taken all " the go " out of him. He would not hazard the risk of failure, so we had to sulk and quietly submit to the insolence of these rebels, who must have thought us a poor lot in consequence. Perhaps I am prejudiced even still against this old major and do his memory injustice. But I write what all of us young captains and subalterns thought at the time. The fact that we had served in the Crimea had doubtless made us bumptious, but we were all bored at being thus cooped up in a way which the circumstances of the moment—as far as we understood them—did not warrant. I think this inflated notion of our superiority over those who had not had the advantage of serving against the Russians was a notable feeling with us generally throughout the Mutiny, and caused many of us to overestimate our importance and to undervalue our Indianized comrades.

We had very little to interest us, or even to occupy our minds, whilst we were besieged in the Alum Bagh. There were no books to while away the tedious, oh ! the very long hours of our imprisonment. We daily mounted the roof of the Palace to gaze round through our telescopes and examine the enemy's position between us and the city. But our eyes were still more longingly bent in the Cawnpore direction. " Sister Anne, Sister Anne, do you see any one coming ? " was the common question we asked our friends who possessed the best binoculars. When the enemy treated us to

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

a few round shot, they gave us unwittingly something interesting, often amusing, to talk about. But we were a dull lot. I have often thought since of what a boon to our garrison in every way a Baden-Powell would have been! Under his auspices we should have had theatricals, and if our united store of books could not have supplied us with a play, why, he would have written one for us and taken himself the leading part in it, either as an old man or as a beautiful young girl. It is men of his bright imagination, resources and diversified talents, a first-rate soldier whom all ranks feel to be a real comrade, who springs to the front during a siege, or when any body of men are in difficulties. In all trying positions such a man is indeed worth much.

Not far from my tent were drawn up in a long row the elephants General Havelock had left behind him when he started thence in the hope of being able to bring back with him the women and children besieged in the Lucknow Residency. These poor animals grew thinner every day. They were on a short allowance of flour, and but very little green food ever came in their way. Their backbones became more prominent as weeks flew by, and at last their bodies assumed very much the shape of an upturned deep-keeled sailing boat in a somewhat dilapidated condition. All of us who were fond of animals felt much for these patient and invaluable slaves. I watched them many an hour, and their intelligent ways and habits interested me greatly. By day their bodies are never entirely at rest. Although their skin is very thick the smallest fly irritates it, and consequently their huge broad ears never cease to flap nor their tails to swing to keep these torments from them. To still further protect them their trunks are employed in taking up pints of dust which they blow over their much wrinkled skins,

## MR. KAVANAGH AND THE KOSSIDS

whose very thickness makes the lines formed by these wrinkles soft and a prey to every species of fly. Indeed, these lines on their skin form a pattern that always reminded me of the marks on old crackled china.

Kossids, that is native messengers carrying news, usually written in Greek characters on small slips of thin paper tightly rolled in a quill, were occasionally able to get through the enemy's lines. But the risk was great, and more than most natives were ready to incur. Outram was very anxious to afford the Commander-in-Chief the benefit of his local knowledge in preparing his schemes for the relief of Lucknow. But it was impossible to send a document describing any such plan by a kossid. This coming to the knowledge of Mr. Kavanagh, a European clerk in one of our public offices in Lucknow, he at once proposed to try and reach our camp disguised as a native. From long residence in the country he spoke Hindostanee extremely well, and, it might be said, like a native. He asked to be allowed to take with him a trustworthy native—in fact an experienced kossid—whom he knew well and upon whose coolness and discretion he could rely. This native would do most of the talking that might be necessary. Mr. Kavanagh's offer was gladly accepted, and to him Sir James Outram described the plan he considered best for Sir Colin Campbell to follow in his intended advance upon the Lucknow Residency. Mr. Kavanagh knew the city and its vicinity thoroughly. He would be able to afford Sir Colin a vast amount of topographical information that was likely to be of inestimable value to him and to the relieving army.

Mr. Kavanagh and his native companion crossed the Goomtee River during the night of November 9, 1857, without much apparent difficulty, and, thanks chiefly to

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the coolness and quick address of his companion and guide, he reached Sir Colin Campbell's camp the next morning. For this splendid and daring service the Queen awarded him the Victoria Cross, and no man ever deserved it more. The daring native was also liberally rewarded. As I shall mention further on, I made Mr. Kavanagh's acquaintance when my company and I were in rather a "tight place" during our endeavour to join hands with the Lucknow besieged garrison.

## CHAPTER XX

### Sir Colin Campbell's Relief of Lucknow

**W**HEN it became generally known that the Bengal native army had mutinied, the eyes of all men, British and native, were turned to Delhi. Men asked one another, "What would the native Royal Family do?" It had never been forgotten by the people that the man to whom we accorded the empty title of king was the legal representative of the old Mohammedan conquerors and rulers of India whom we had dispossessed. The hostile feeling of these Princes towards us was proverbial, but the Indian world knew there was not a really able man amongst them. When all the English officials and other Europeans in Delhi fled for their lives, its royal palace at once became the headquarters of this formidable rebellion. We had long permitted this Moslem royal family to reside there surrounded with every luxury, but we had never allowed any of its members the smallest share in the government of the country. The native princes, thus bereft of all power, were naturally discontented with their lot, and when the Mutiny broke out it was equally natural they should side with the sepoys who were prepared to recognize the Great Mogul as their lawful sovereign. It may be assumed, I think, that these princes were fully aware from the first of the formidable and secret combination against us. All available British troops were at once collected in hot haste from north, south, east and

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

west to besiege Delhi, and upon the result depended for a long time the question as to whether we should be able to hold our own beyond the space enclosed within the old Mahratta Ditch at Calcutta pending the arrival of reinforcements from home.

This Siege of Delhi was the most memorable event in the history of the great Mutiny, and never did the pluck and endurance of the British and of our Punjaub soldiers of all ranks, from the general to the private, shine forth more brilliantly. How I wished at the time to be there. Its assault and capture marked the turning point in the Mutiny, and we all breathed more freely when it fell. It was a splendid military achievement, and our subsequent proceedings in Oudh and elsewhere, though most creditable to all concerned, were not in importance to be compared to it. When I subsequently learned the details of its events from Sir Grant Hope and his aide-de-camp, Augustus Anson, I realized how much I had missed. The story of that siege and of the operations in its neighbourhood told to me by them sounded to my ears like an epic. It is not to be surpassed either in the mighty consequences that hung upon its issue, in the brilliancy of its daily incidents, nor in examples of heroic daring on the part of the besiegers, by any siege I know of in ancient or modern history.

When the news of its fall first reached us in Oudh we felt that the backbone of the Mutiny had been broken. The eyes of all Hindostan had from the first been turned towards Delhi, and upon the line that would be taken by its Princes. They certainly threw their lot in with our mutinous sepoy, and they were now in our hands as prisoners. Delhi retaken became once more an appanage of our Indian Empire.



## THE RELIEFS AND SIEGES OF LUCKNOW

The news received went on to say that most of our Delhi army were already on the march southwards to help us, and were expected to cross at Cawnpore into Oudh about the 28th instant (October). Sir Colin Campbell was to come with it, and upon his arrival at the Alum Bagh would take forward our three company detachment with him.

As some misapprehension has arisen from the manner in which the expressions, "The Siege of Lucknow" and "The Relief of Lucknow," are often used, I will here make a few remarks upon the subject that may be of use to my reader.

It is not generally remembered that we had two "sieges" and two so-called "reliefs" of that place about the end of 1857 and the beginning of 1858. In the first siege, the garrison consisted of a mere handful of British soldiers. They occupied the unfortified Residency, which was crowded with English women and children who had taken refuge there from many parts of Oudh. The besiegers were a vast horde of mutineers and of armed men from the city and neighbouring districts. That truly great man, General Sir Henry Lawrence, who was "Chief Commissioner" to the Court of Oudh, assumed military command of the place as soon as it was hemmed in by the enemy. But within a few days of its being invested he was most unfortunately killed in his room overlooking the Goomtee River by a shell from the enemy. The command of the garrison then devolved upon Colonel Inglis, 32nd Regiment, who, though by no means an able man in any respect, possessed the pluck and decision to abide by Sir Henry Lawrence's injunction to hold out as long as possible, and never to make any terms with the treacherous enemy around him.

General Sir James Outram, having been appointed Chief

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

was necessary because of the uncertainty of life even among the strongest and healthiest Europeans in such a deadly climate.

I never thought the war could be effectually finished without British troops, and I believed throughout that they could be employed for a dash upon Koomassee without inordinate risk. I was consequently anxious, as soon as possible, to try the experiment of a small fight with the Ashantees, in which native levies, helped by the few battalions I was raising locally from the tribes of the best fighting reputation, should be alone employed. The sooner I could make this trial the better, for if it satisfied me that British troops would certainly be required the sooner I demanded them from home the sooner I should be able to finish the business.

I enlisted two classes of men, those who belonged to warlike tribes who would fight, and those who could only be depended upon as carriers. Amongst the latter were the Croomen, who are admirable boatmen, and some of whom are usually to be found on board all our vessels of war on that station. But though brave as boatmen they tell you plainly they will not fight. Their God is known by the name of "Duppy," and if a Crooman imagines he has seen that deity he lies down to die, and dies very shortly. I have been told this by several who knew the Croomen well and liked them, and I saw an instance of it up the Nile in 1885, where I employed many of them as boatmen. They are a cheery lot and real Neptunes in the water. Although they won't fight, and fear Duppy, they have apparently no fear of death or danger. But I must not pause to tell of the various races I enlisted, for they were many and nearly all of them cowards of a

## CAPTAIN ARTHUR RAIT

pronounced type who dreaded the Ashantees. That was unfortunate for me, for the Ashantees were the enemy I wanted them to meet.

By far the best fighting men to be had were the Houssas, a fine Mohammedan people from far inland, near Lake Chad. I have always attributed much, if not all, their superiority as soldiers to the fact that their worship of one God alone, the Creator of all things, elevates their minds above the machinations and superstitions of idolatry, and raises them accordingly in spirit and in courage above the fetish-worshipping tribes around them. The followers of the Prophet in all epochs and in all countries have proved themselves to be daring and obedient soldiers, and these Houssas are no exception to that rule.

The Houssas were often wild in action from lack of discipline, but they were real fighting men, who always meant business, and would follow their white officers. They were the only trustworthy soldiers at hand for the protection of Cape Coast Castle with its Government establishments and prosperous town.

I allowed Captain Arthur Rait, of the Horse Artillery, to man his guns exclusively with Houssas. No men could behave better than they did throughout the campaign under that gallant soul, now in Heaven, but who whilst on earth was the bravest of cheery, determined, able and loyal comrades. A man of cool courage whom no dangers could daunt, of great physical endurance, who never spared himself and who even made light of the fevers which at times held him in their grip. How can England adequately repay the services of such a son? How can her Sovereign thank him sufficiently?

No one could admire the courage, determination and

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

zeal of Captain Glover more than I did, but looking back now at the events of this campaign, and at the many serious elements of failure it embraced, I feel, that had the interests of the State been alone considered it would have been wiser to have withdrawn Captain Glover altogether from the coast when I reached it.

He was a very remarkable man. I never saw a face on which pluck and firm resolve were more legibly written ; indeed he looked the man who was born to rule an African dominion. Endowed with an iron constitution, considerable ability, and great determination of character, as administrator of the Government at Lagos he had acquired much experience in dealing with West African people of all grades and of all colours. He understood them well, and knew how to rule them, though at times, perhaps, his wise and practical methods were not strictly in accordance with the preaching of Exeter Hall nor with the Queen's Regulations. As a lieutenant, in 1853, he had taken part in the unfortunate expedition under Captain Lock, R.N., from the River Irrewaddy into the Burmese jungles. I have referred to this operation at the beginning of these memoirs.<sup>1</sup>

The Secretary of State for the Colonies, having rightly formed a high opinion of Captain Glover's ability, sent him to the Gold Coast with somewhat vague instructions as to raising a native force in the eastern province of our protectorate. He on his part had given Lord Kimberley a rough outline of his plan for bringing the Ashantee King to reason by operating against Koomasse from the River Volta as a base.

In the instructions he received from the Colonial Office

<sup>1</sup> See p. 42, vol. i.

## CAPTAIN GLOVER, R.N.

he was ordered to "subject himself to the general control of the officer administering the Gold Coast." He had selected some excellent officers to accompany him, and I believe, had succeeded in collecting about 1,000 Houssas before I arrived. It was an unwise and expensive arrangement, for had I been given those 1,000 Houssas I should have been able to have done all I wanted with two instead of three British battalions, thereby saving a large outlay and the lives of many British soldiers.

No men could have worked harder than Captain Glover and the excellent officers he had with him, but they contributed little towards the end aimed at. Their employment is a good illustration of how much can be thrown away when the War Office and the Colonial Office each attempts to carry on a campaign at the same time for the attainment of the same object. If as a taxpayer I may venture to express an opinion, I would say that it is at least an unbusinesslike proceeding. The War Office and the Admiralty are respectively charged by the nation with the conduct of war, one upon land the other upon sea. I cannot too strongly deprecate the egregious folly of placing the command of a fleet in the hands of a soldier, or of an army in the hands of a sailor: one is as ridiculous a proceeding as the other, and the whole teaching of history warns us against any such stupid folly.

Early in December, 1873, Captain Glover had collected at Blappah, on the lower Volta, a native army that was said to be 18,000 strong. To be of any important use it was essential he should cross the Prah at the point he had selected on or about January 15, 1874, the date I named for him to do so, and when I also meant to cross at Prahsu. He did cross then, but with only some 800 Houssas, and

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

although he was never seriously engaged I have no doubt that his advance from a different direction did affect King Koffee's nerves. It did not, however, prevent us from having to fight our way through the Ashantee army into Koomassee, and looking back at Captain Glover's costly expedition, I should say that it was embarked upon by Lord Kimberley with too little consideration, and that practically it had not any commensurate effect upon the result of the war. It did, however, deprive me of the services of the 1,000 Houssas Captain Glover was able to collect from Cape Coast Castle, from Lagos and from our other coast stations, upon whom I had counted much before leaving England.

The general plan of campaign I had determined upon before reaching my destination divided itself naturally into two phases: (1) what I could effect before the white troops arrived; (2) what I should do with my little army of British soldiers and natives when I had succeeded in concentrating it at Prahsu. Number one divided itself into two objectives which must be accomplished before number two could be begun; they were as follows:—

(a) To clear out the Ashantees from the protectorate with whatever native troops I could raise;

(b) The construction of a road from Cape Coast to Prahsu—a distance said to be about seventy-five miles—and the preparation of good shelter for the white troops at the selected halting-places.

I began on number one immediately upon landing.

I quickly realized from what I had seen and learnt of the country between the coast and Prahsu that in the short time at my disposal for operations in the interior the construction of a railway between those two points

## SIR COLIN REACHES THE ALUM BAGH

by the addition to our three companies of some companies of the 84th Regiment and of the Madras Fusiliers to a total of about 600 bayonets. We had no tents, and a bivouac towards the middle of November in Oudh, where wood for great fires is difficult to obtain, is not the way in which "Micky Free" would have selected to pass a night.

Sir Colin's relieving army consisted of about 700 sabres, 3,800 bayonets, and some 24 guns, of which a few were heavy pieces. Having deposited his camp equipment and all unnecessary impedimenta within the Alum Bagh enclosure, he started November 14, 1857, on his difficult and most important mission. We had with us fourteen days' provisions for ourselves and for all those whom we hoped to relieve in Lucknow. Instead of pushing straight forwards by the road General Havelock had injudiciously followed as far as the Char-Bagh bridge, we moved off at once to our right, and entirely clear of the city, passing by the old ruined fort of Jellahabad, and keeping well in the open, where we should always have the advantage of the enemy. We circled, as it were, round the southern and eastern outskirts of Lucknow at a distance of about a mile and a half from the then unfordable canal which there formed the city boundary, until we struck the river Goomtee as it flows below the high ground upon which stands, in imposing grandeur, the palace known as the Dil Khoosha—in English, "The Heart's Delight." It is about three and a half miles south-east of the Residency, and was the shooting residence of the Kings of Oudh. A high wall of sun-dried brick surrounded it, through which openings were easily made. As we entered it, several small deer of various sorts ran about, terrified at this unusual invasion ; most of them were in the soldiers' camp kettles that evening. We were thrown forward

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

into a line of skirmishers, and as we advanced an elephant came charging backwards through my company with the lower half of his trunk hanging by a strip of skin to the other half above it. This had been done by a round shot, and the poor beast was trumpeting loudly from pain as he passed me. I knew the elephant well for a couple of years afterwards: it got on satisfactorily, its mahout feeding it by hand, and taking it daily into deep water to drink.

Below us, and about three-quarters of a mile north of the Dil Khoosha, stood a very large, ugly, and un-Indian looking edifice known as the Martiniere College, between which and the city were fine mango gardens. From both it and the Dil Khoosha the enemy retired upon our approach, treating us to a few round shot as they did so. Having reached this college, we turned sharp to the left—in a north-westerly direction—along the road that led from it straight into the city, and took up a position in a fine garden of trees covered by Haidar's Canal, which there forming the south-eastern boundary of the city, empties itself about a mile lower down its course into the Goomtee River. Our long straggling column of commissariat animals was so far behind that Sir Colin determined to push on no further that day. Fires were soon lit, and the smell of cooking had begun to gladden the noses of our hungry men when the enemy showed signs of attacking. They opened upon us with some guns, and plied us with musketry pretty freely. We fell in and advanced towards Banks' House, which stood as a prominent feature beyond the canal just referred to. Captain Peel's guns had come into action within a few hundred yards of it, and as we came up and were about to pass to the front through them, he held up his hand and



## THE ENEMY'S BRASS SHELLS

said, with the cool affability which always distinguished him, "One more broadside, if you please, gentlemen." The expression smelt of the sea, and amused us much. What a splendid fellow he was! We halted, he poured in his "broadside," and we then doubled down to the canal, but found it unfordable. However, the enemy showed no more signs of annoying us, and my company having been left there on picket and as a protection for Peel's guns, the rest of Barnston's scratch battalion retired to their bivouac in the Martiniere grounds. The enemy threw several small shells amongst us during the evening from a mortar near the canal bank. I don't think any of them burst, or if they did, we at any rate received no injury from them. I only refer to them because upon no other occasion had I ever seen brass shells made use of. They had evidently been recently cast in the Lucknow bazaars. The night was cold, dark, and very still, so that as I went round my sentries along the canal I could plainly hear the enemy talking on the opposite bank. We remained on picket in a hollow out of sight all the next day, November 15. The enemy fired heavily upon any one who showed himself, but I don't think they harmed a man of my company. The sun was very hot all through that day, and we felt it much, having neither tree nor wall to shelter us. We were glad to be relieved that evening, as we had been up and about all the previous night. We all slept soundly, though our bivouac was cold; I know I did.

Next day, November 16, we did not move off until nearly noon. Sir Colin Campbell had paid us a visit some time before, and telling Major Barnston that he wished to see the officers of his "scratch battalion," he made us a little address. He impressed upon us the necessity of using the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

bayonet as much as possible when we got into the city, and not halting to fire when we could avoid doing so.

Upon "falling in" we moved to our right, my company leading. Passing round a native village, and then turning towards the city, we marched between the village and the Goomtee River to the canal, upon the bank of which we had been on picket about a mile higher up the previous night. We crossed this canal close to where it joined the Goomtee and below where the enemy had dammed it, and so got over it with dry feet. Cutting off a wide bend of the river, we made for the northern end of a village—about a mile from where we had crossed the canal—which I afterwards knew as Sultangunj, into the long and narrow main street of which we turned in a southerly direction. It was deserted, and for some time we were unopposed. I think we had two or three men of what was then the best of cavalry regiments—the 9th Lancers—in front of us. Behind them came my company, and then some twenty or thirty more of that regiment. A couple of 18-pounders were not far off, for Sir Colin was evidently aware that the enemy strongly held the Sekunder Bagh (the garden of Alexander the Great) and the Shah Nujif mosque beyond it, and that heavy guns would be required to breach the thick, twenty-feet high brick walls surrounding both those places. The Sekunder Bagh was a garden about a hundred yards square, with a substantial turret at each angle and a high two or three storied gateway in the middle of its southern face.

Behind the guns came either the remainder of Barnston's battalion or the 93rd Highlanders; both were close together. In passing through the deserted village, which the enemy made no attempt to defend, we suffered nothing for some time, though a continued flight of bullets was passing over

## MY PLUCKY COLOUR-SERGEANT

us. My Madras servant kept close behind me. He was a very plucky fellow, much given to looting and quite indifferent to danger. His brother was a native officer in a Madras Sepoy Regiment. All along the village street, at every short check, and there were many of them, he kicked in the door of the house nearest to him, and I believe collected (!) a good amount of rupees, for he knew where to look for them in the roofs and floors. At last I saw the few lancers who were in front of me huddling close together in a corner of the street. The fire was becoming too hot for mounted men ; indeed, I thought at the time it was unwise to have placed them in so false a position. We now pushed forward beyond them, and had to cross a tolerably wide street running at right angles to the line of our advance. Down it the enemy poured a heavy musketry fire. I called out to my men to run across it, and did so myself, with a splendid young sergeant close behind. He is now Major Newland, on the retired list. No pluckier man ever followed his officer, and no man ever deserved his promotion better.

The colour-sergeant of my company was a fine-looking fellow, but destitute of all nerve or pluck. I never could find him when the bullets were in full chorus, so I displaced him immediately after we had relieved Lucknow. Of course, he had come to us "from another regiment": that is a true article of regimental belief in all corps as regards objectionable officers or useless sergeants or privates.

As I ran over this open street where it joined that we were advancing along, I went as fast as I could, with Sergeant Newland close behind me. I turned to see how my men were coming on when I reached the far side, and found Sergeant Newland with his hand on his mouth,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

from which he was bleeding freely. When he removed his hand, I saw that a bullet had cut away and mangled his upper lip horribly. Of course he was thus lost to me for the rest of the operations, and a great loss he was. Where the village ends, the road ran into a sort of deep cutting in which one was well sheltered; but the highly walled-in Sekunder Bagh was on our right, and from it a heavy fire was poured upon any one who showed over the sloping side of the road. In a short time way was made along the road behind us for a heavy gun. When it reached me, the question was how to get it out of this deep, hollow road to the level of the ground on which stood the walls of the Sekunder Bagh. It could only be done by hand, so we all buckled to, and with hand ropes, and by dint of spoking at the wheels, we at last got it where it came into action. But it cost us much in men's lives to do so. The enemy's bullets peppered us sorely, and seemed to hammer the iron tyre of the wheel I was working at. It is astonishing how any one lived through the heavy fire poured in upon us at such very close range during this trying operation. However, my men lying down along the bank with their heads only exposed when they had loaded and were ready to fire, did much to keep down the enemy's fire, for I don't think we were over eighty yards from the corner tower of the place when we hauled the gun into action. The gun opened fire at once, sending great clouds of dust into the air when at each round its heavy shot struck the wall. Close behind me were the 93rd Highlanders, and as soon as the gun had made a sufficiently big hole in the wall, they went gallantly for it, whilst Wylde, with his magnificent regiment of Sikhs, went for the only gateway into the place and quickly burst it open.

There was a very narrow staircase on each side of the

## BLOUNT'S TROOP OF HORSE ARTILLERY

arched gateway leading to an upper story, well packed with the enemy. Without a moment's hesitation the Sikhs mounted these winding corkscrew-like stairs, and in a few minutes were amidst the enemy, cutting them up with their tulwars and hurling others out of the open windows. Few British soldiers would have done this, and yet their loss was small. They knew their enemy's habits and mode of thought better than we did. However, no matter what they knew, it was a splendid illustration of the pluck and daring of the Punjaub soldiers. Major Wylde, certainly one of the bravest of men, was himself either killed or badly wounded in this affair.

Blount's troop of Bengal Horse Artillery now came up the lane of the village by which we had marched, and having struggled up its steep bank to the level of the ground surrounding the Sekunder Bagh, it galloped past that building, unlimbered, and came into action against the Shah Najif. I never saw anything prettier or more gallantly done in action.

As we looked from the Sekunder Bagh towards the Residency, this Shah Najif mosque, with its massive white dome, was to our right front, and not more than about six or seven hundred yards from us, whilst immediately in our front were the ruins of some mud-built sepoy lines. Our brigadier, Adrian Hope, now told me to advance my company at the double and occupy these ruined huts, as the enemy's skirmishers had already begun to annoy the men of Blount's battery from them. At that time my men were lying along the main road that led from the Sekunder Bagh to the barracks, and were thus covering the left of Blount's battery, then engaged with the sepoys in front. I did as I was told, and we advanced at a quick pace—

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

much faster than our regulation double. I was glad when doing so to hold on by Adrian Hope's stirrup leather, as he trotted forward. A gallant, daring soul and a most rising soldier, he was killed soon afterwards in trying to accomplish what was impossible, but what the arrogant presumption of an ignorant, over-bearing superior—styled a general—had ordered him to undertake. I soon had my men under cover amidst the walls and ruins of the old native lines. But I found that I required cover from the rear quite as much as from the front, as a large proportion of Blount's shells, fired from our right rear, burst at the muzzle through the badness of their fuses,<sup>1</sup> and sent their splinters and their bullets amongst us. Alas, I then lost a great friend, Major Barnston, from this cause. He was one of the very best soldiers I ever knew in the Army.

Sir Colin Campbell had ordered him to take his scratch battalion forward—minus my company sent on another mission, as I have just described—and strive to get into the Shah Najif mosque, which I have already said stood on the right of the road into the city. His orders were, "If you cannot force your way in, get your men under cover near it, and come back and tell me what you have done and seen."

He did as he was ordered, but every available point of ingress that he could get at was built up. He tried in vain to force an entrance, but could not do so. Having therefore placed his men in the best shelter he could find, he galloped back and told Sir Colin what he had done. Sir Colin said, "Very well, keep your men there for the present and I will reinforce you." Barnston turned his horse and started to

<sup>1</sup> Fuse composition deteriorates quickly in India, or at least it did so at the time to which I refer.

## MAJOR BARNSTON MORTALLY WOUNDED

gallop back to his men, when another of those thrice accursed shells from Blount's battery burst at the muzzle, and a great piece of it struck my comrade in the thigh.

The Shah Najif fell into our possession towards evening, after it had been for a considerable time subjected to such a bombardment from Captain Peel's naval guns, and from other heavy pieces worked by the Royal Artillery, that the native garrison could no longer remain in it.

When the day's work was over, we were ordered to retire and bivouac under the high walls of the Sekunder Bagh. As soon as I had piled arms, I went inside to try and find my comrade Barnston, as I was told the wounded had been sent there. This was a mistake, but I was glad I went in, for I never before had seen the dead piled up, one above the other in tiers, in order to clear a passage through a mass of slain. Such was the case in the archway leading into that awful charnel-house where lay the bodies of some 2,000 unfaithful sepoys. As soon as I entered the garden I was fired at by some of the enemy in one of the corner towers of the building, and having ascertained that none of our wounded were in the place I returned to my bivouac with a saddened heart at having failed to find my chum, Major Barnston. Later on I found him. He was quite cheery but said he was cold, so I gave him my overcoat. We parted, and my heart was sore indeed, for I knew from personal experience how dangerous big wounds in India always are. I never saw him again. He was taken to Cawnpore, and during the morning of the day he died, as I was afterwards told, he received a letter from me, which was read to him, at which he was much pleased, and he was greatly interested with the military news it contained. The remembrance of that fact has always been a satisfaction to me. In common with all his comrades, I deeply felt his

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

who had scarcely opposed our approach to the place, ceased firing about sundown. Colonel Wood had been ordered to make a reconnaissance in force upon the enemy's rear during my march, but his cowardly Cape Coast people could not be induced to do so, and his guides purposely led him astray.

At daybreak next morning, November 7, the enemy opened a mere dropping fire upon our outposts, and it soon became evident they were already in full retreat. They had lost heavily and expended a vast amount of ammunition without doing us much damage. Several officers had been hard hit, but the slugs had not done much harm, and the lost in killed and wounded amongst our native levies had been small. The Cape Coast chiefs with a rabble following arrived early that day, and I told them they must that afternoon attack the retreating enemy. They said they would do so, but I had no confidence in their assurance, as I knew them to be a cowardly lot.

They paraded at 2 p.m., and were with difficulty formed into a rough line in front of the position held by the Ashantees the evening before. My officers belaboured them with sticks and umbrellas, and Russell's fierce Kossoos drove them on with their cutlasses from behind. Had I not witnessed this scene I could not have believed that the world contained such cowards. The chiefs, if anything, were worse than their followers. But the bush in their front proved to be unoccupied, for the Ashantee army had already fallen back.

I at once sent forward all the King of Abrah's men and our own Houssas to where the main body of the enemy were encamped. They surprised the rear guard, and nearly captured Amanquatia, the Ashantee commander-



## DOWN WITH FEVER

in-chief, who was said to have remained behind to have a good drink before he retreated. His camp equipment was taken, including his bed, sedan chair, drums, sacred cock and other fetish appliances. A pursuit was attempted, but in vain ; my native forces of all sorts would do nothing but plunder the quantities of loot left in the enemy's camp and abandoned along the road they were retreating by. A considerable number of slaves were taken, who were mostly fastened by the wrists with iron staples driven into logs of wood. One, a good-looking Fantee woman with a baby, had a miraculous escape. When we attacked the camp her master bolted, ordering her to follow. He thought she did not do so with sufficient alacrity, so proceeded to cut her throat, and whilst so engaged was killed by one of our bullets. A fearful looking and fresh gash in her throat corroborated her story.

I reached Cape Coast that same evening in a high state of fever. I have had hundreds of tussles with that enemy in my career, but I think this was the worst I ever had. Thanks be to God, however, the care and ability of my old brother officer, Surgeon-General Sir A. Home, V.C., and the devoted and careful nursing of lieutenant, now General Sir F. Maurice, pulled me safely through. May my worst enemy never know so bad a time, mentally and bodily, as I had then. For six days there are no entries in my diary. During that well-nigh sleepless period I often felt as if I must go mad, for my thoughts apparently flew with electric rapidity and without reason from one subject to millions of others. I dictated to myself over and over again a letter to Mr. Cardwell in which I resigned my appointment, and expressed my deep sorrow at being obliged to do so. In the worst night of my waking fever,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

I remember well how my puzzled brain tried repeatedly to work out a quadratic equation which no amount of transposition would enable me to solve. Existence in the narrow borderland which intervenes between sanity and insanity in such cases is always a fearful experience. I ought to know every natural feature in that parched and waterless region, so often in life has my fever-stricken and waking mind wandered over it, and so often have I seen other men fall struggling upon its hot burning sands never to rise again. But there is nothing loathsome or disgusting in the horrors which overtake the merely fever-worried brain. You may in excited moments suspect those about you of trying to kill you, of some great conspiracy against your body, but the snakes and horrors which haunt the poor, abject creature in delirium tremens, and whose loathsome appearance terrifies him, do not vex the merely fever-racked man. The former is for the time an abject coward, ashamed of himself and almost paralyzed by the visions which scare him. But no terror, no shrinking horror enters into the miseries suffered in malarial fever. The worst moments come from a feeling of inability and want of strength, both mental and physical, to accomplish some quaint objective that for the moment fills the overwrought brain.

The noise of the surf as it beats at night upon the shore, conveys to the keenly sensitive ears of the fever-stricken an idea of fresh coolness; until its monotony becomes wearisome and then actually terrifying. It tells you of that solemn and mysterious ocean that surges upon the coast in often the calmest weather. You fancy you can hear that curious hissing noise each wave makes as it spends its force higher and further up that hard shore of sand. My

## THE GOLD COAST FEVER

fevered, wandering mind often strayed away into a sort of mad practicality, as I puzzled over the millions of tons of energy thus uselessly expended every day and night. Why was not this great force turned to some useful purpose in the economy of the world? Then off darted my illogical mental bewilderment into insoluble speculations as to the fortunes that might be made by any one who had the sense to turn this power to some mercantile purpose. Why, all the spinning jennies of Lancashire might be kept at work by the unused force of the sea upon the Gold Coast alone!

To the man stricken with delirious fever and thereby distressed through fancied thoughts of duties neglected and of work he ought to, but cannot, undertake, the disturbed sleep snatched at moments brings little rest—no satisfaction. No refreshing comfort comes there with sleep as it does in other countries. Too often it leaves you as it found you, tossing from side to side on your hated bed, restless in mind and body, and with a skin so dry, so hot, that it feels like scorched parchment. Your mind is torn with cares that madden it, and your very muscles lose their power from the fever that rages within you. Will the night never end? What o'clock is it? When will that sun, hated at midday, rise to tell you that the night is over, and another dull day of abject misery is before you? You will be at least so many hours nearer the crisis when some unknown power and authority will decide your fate, coldly regardless of your wishes or your feelings. What will the decision be? Must you go home and so bid good-bye to the immediate ambitions that filled your mind when it was strong and healthy three days ago? Are you to linger on there far from all you love and tortured by your inability to share with comrades the work you had left England to carry out, until grim death

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

relieves you from all care, all sorrow and anxiety? How the tortured mind strives to answer these self-given questions until feverish imagination, quickened by reviving hope, limns out fanciful pictures of returning health, of partially restored strength. But so weak are you that the very exertion of thinking, and the mechanical fatigue it entails, robs you so of mental power that your wearied head drops upon the pillow, and sleep—soft, silent, gentle sleep, comes mercifully to your rescue.

But what pen could describe the working of a man's brain when it is on fire with a Gold Coast fever? Perhaps Edgar Poe might, but no one else of whom I have ever heard could do so effectively. Knowing what those tortures are from horrible experience I could not have it on my conscience to inflict them upon my worst enemy had I the dire power of doing so. However, on November 20, I was again well and hearty, and fully able to work once more.

After the Ashantee army's severe repulse at Abrahampa I was busy throughout the month of November in slowly pushing it back beyond the River Prah. At first I was much tempted to collect all the white soldiers and sailors and all my available Houssas in order to make a dash upon the rear of the retreating enemy. With them I felt I might inflict a severe blow, but would that result be worth the cost? The sun and fever would for certain largely reduce the number of fighting white men upon whom I should have to depend chiefly for success in my eventual advance upon Koomassee. It would also seriously retard the construction of our Prahsu road and the erection of shelters at the halting-places along it. Worst of all, any such operation would necessarily eat largely into the magazines of food I had established, and without which I

## THE ROYAL ENGINEERS

could not hope to move beyond the Prah. Having deliberately weighed the matter in my mind, I resolved to adhere to my original plan of operations.

All through the months of November and December work upon the Koomassee road was pushed forward unceasingly, stations being established and preparations made for housing the troops during their advance along it. At each station where I intended the white regiments to halt upon their march to the Prah good huts were erected, fitted with bamboo bedsteads to keep the men off the ground at night. The water supply, our most important point, was well attended to. Large filters were provided, and every arrangement that the scientific knowledge of our invaluable principal medical officer, Dr. Home, suggested, was attended to as far as the means at our disposal would admit.

I made frequent excursions to inspect the work and keep all ranks up to the mark. But the heart of every man was in what he had to do, and every private of the Royal Engineers seemed as earnest and as anxious to do all in his power to make the expedition a complete success as the very best of our officers. We have every reason as a nation to be proud of the corps of Royal Engineers. Having served as one of them throughout the most trying period of our great siege in the Crimea, and having watched their work in many campaigns, I know the sapper well. His regimental spirit, devotion to duty, capability and capacity for work, stamp him as the "handy man" of our Army. I only wish we had far more of them, and that several officers in every regiment of cavalry and battalion of foot, and at least a few men of every company and of every squadron in all our regiments of Regulars,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

outside the Moti Mahul Palace wall and close to the great gate into it. This "Motee Mahul" or "Pearl Palace" was surrounded by a thick masonry wall at least twenty feet in height, and was the home of the Begum. There stood a high detached wall, some fifteen yards in extent, in front of the entrance, so that although you could drive round this sort of outer "tambour," no matter where you stood you could not see into the courtyard within. The enemy had recently built up the two entrances round this tambour into the palace square, the fresh brickwork being well loopholed. In fact, they had thus provided that face of the palace with a good flanking defence. From its loopholes the enemy at once opened fire upon us. What was to be done? We could only stay where we were by taking forcible possession of those loopholes. When two hostile bodies are thus separated, it is naturally the pluckier of the two who maintains himself at the loopholes. In this instance the Pandeas soon gave up the question of ownership in our favour. But they occasionally contrived to sneak a shot through by crawling along the ground with a loaded musket, and inserting its muzzle suddenly into a loophole they managed somehow or other to pull the trigger on the chance of hitting some one. I had a few men wounded by this process, and was consequently anxious to dig a hole as quickly as possible through this newly constructed brickwork, whose freshly laid mortar was still soft. The old walls round the palace were too high and too solid to admit of our either climbing over, or of our burrowing under them. I called to those in rear to send me a few crowbars and pickaxes, and in a short time we saw men in the near distance coming with some. My old servant Andrews, seeing these men were going astray, ran into the open to put them right again, and as he did so he was laid low by a shot

## RELIEF OF LUCKNOW

from a loophole that, not being one of those looking down where my men were, I had not obtained possession of. I ran into the road where he fell, and getting my arms under him proceeded to drag him under cover. Whilst doing so, another shot, coming from a loophole not ten feet off—fired at me, I presume—went through him. I soon had him in a place of safety, and I think my old and valued friend, now Sir Robert Jackson, who was always in the thick of every fight, then one of our assistant surgeons, patched him up temporarily. But, poor fellow, he was never able to serve again, and died some years afterwards from this wound when serving in the Corps of Commissioners. A braver or more daring soldier I never knew. He was a pure Cockney.

The newly arrived tools were soon in use, and with them a hole was being rapidly made through the lately built loop-holed wall, when a civilian made his appearance. My first idea was that he had come out from the Residency. Asked who he was, he said he was Mr. Kavanagh who—as already mentioned—had recently joined us at the Alum Bagh from Sir James Outram, for the purpose of pointing out to Sir Colin Campbell the best road by which he could reach the Residency. He said he had lived so long in Lucknow that he knew well the locality we were in, and that if I would go with him he would show me a way round by which I could easily get into the Motee Mahul. I did so, but thought he did not know his way about as well as he had led me to suppose. At last he took me to another gate, but it was also built up. I consequently made my way back quickly to where I had left some of my men busily engaged in making a hole through the wall that shut us out from the great entrance. As I approached, I caught sight of the soles of a pair of boots and the lower part of a man's legs, the rest of

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

his body being through the small hole just made, which others were still working hard to enlarge. I asked who it was : " Ensign Haig " was the answer. I have seen many a reckless deed done in action, but I never knew of a more dare-devil exhibition of pluck than this was. In any other regiment this young ensign would have had the Victoria Cross, but to ask for that decoration was not the custom in the 90th Light Infantry.

The hole grew rapidly bigger, and one by one we crawled through it until the whole company were within the tam-bour. I took them at once into the open courtyard, round one side of which there were still stray knots of the enemy who fired at us from open doors and windows. As I marched along it, keeping close to the buildings, a man suddenly made a fierce cut at me with his tulwar which nearly shaved my head as I just managed to avoid it. They began to fire through small loopholes that had been pierced through the walls of the buildings in which they had taken refuge. I had several of these holes covered over with little baskets, so common in all native buildings, which well propped up from without by sticks prevented those inside from aiming well at us outside. We there killed many of the enemy, at which work we were busily employed when suddenly there was an explosion on the opposite, the western, side of the courtyard, and out of the cloud of dust and smoke that rose from it, there ran forward an officer and a number of British soldiers coming from Mr. Martin's house and the Residency direction. To the astonishment of us all, it was Captain Tinling of my regiment with his company behind him. They had sprung a mine to blow down the palace wall to enable them to make a sortie in order to meet our relieving force. We had both too much to do to squander time in commonplace talk, but



## THE GARRISON RELIEVED

to all ranks of those two companies the meeting was indeed a hearty one, and none of the survivors are likely to forget it.

Shortly afterwards there came out from the Residency the chivalrous Outram, and with him the stern Ironside, General Havelock, looking ill and worn.

In that square, where the two companies of my regiment, the relieved and the relievers, met, there shortly afterwards took place the celebrated meeting between Sir Colin Campbell and the two besieged generals. The well-known picture of that event shows the main gate by which my company forced its way in, and though there is a theatrical air about the picture, which represents every one looking clean and tidy, which none of us certainly did look, the main features of that remarkable and historic event are well represented on the canvas.

Whilst in this palace square, our Brigadier, Colonel Adrian Hope, took me aside and said, "I advise you to keep out of Sir Colin's way : he is furious with you for pushing on beyond the Mess House, for the capture of which his orders to you alone extended." "Rather hard on me," was my answer. However I was fully compensated for this unlooked-for injustice on the part of the Commander-in-Chief, by the extremely kind and flattering terms in which Adrian Hope spoke to me of what my company had achieved. I confess, however, that I felt much hurt by what he told me, though I fully understood the reason ; I had upset Sir Colin's little plan for the relief of Lucknow by the 93rd Highlanders.

Colonel Adrian Hope said, "Your men must be tired, take them back along the main road and halt upon it near the Shah Najif ; they will be sure of having a quiet night there, and they want it."

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Rather sore, very sore indeed I may say, at what my Brigadier had told me, I marched my men off to the appointed spot, piled arms upon the side of the road, and all having had something to eat, we lay down there for a good night's rest. I don't know how long I had been in the land of dreams when I was roused by the angry voice of one of my subalterns, a charming man named Carter. As he was using strong language—and he could use strong expletives upon occasion—I inquired what the matter was : he said that some infernal son of a gun had put one of the legs of his charpoy—a native bed—right in the middle of his stomach. I tried to soothe him, and we were all soon once more soundly forgetful of life's miseries.

At the first streak of dawn I awoke and sat up, somewhat stiff, for I was cold, having no greatcoat. My eye lit upon the offending charpoy that Carter had condemned in strong words to the "old gentleman's" care during the previous night. Its occupant woke up at the same moment, and to my horror I saw it was Sir Colin. He also had come back to that quiet spot on the road for some sleep, and some one had found a charpoy for him. In placing it on the road, Sir Colin had accidentally planted one of its legs upon my subaltern Carter's stomach. The whole position under ordinary circumstances would have been intensely comical had it not been for what Adrian Hope had told me the evening before. Sir Colin saw me in a moment, and shaking his fist at me with a pleasant smile, he said, "If I had but caught you yesterday!" His anger had left him, and no man ever said nicer or more complimentary things to me than he did then. He ended our conversation by telling me I should have my promotion. He did not know that two years before I had already been promised it as soon as I should complete the

## CHAPTER XLVII

### Sir George Colley

THE extra third battalion largely aided me in accomplishing the objects I had in view, and enabled me to leave behind, to guard our communications with Prahsu, the 2nd West India Regiment, of whose colonel and officers at that time I had no high opinion. The transport question was my chief difficulty, but since the arrival of Major Colley, to whom I had given over its command and organization, I felt easier on that head. He was—all round—one of the very ablest men I ever knew. Perfect as a man of business, I never served with any one who could so absolutely evolve order from confusion or straighten out the most tangled web of difficulties so effectually as he could. Always cool, even in the greatest danger, nothing could apparently ruffle his calm decision of character. He was a deep, sober and active thinker who calculated out in his logical brain all the chances and possibilities of any undertaking he had conceived himself, or that had been proposed by another, before he adopted it. In the field, as I knew him, he was an extremely clever, hard-working man of great bodily activity, who never spared himself. When this little war came to an end, I should have picked him out as the ablest officer then in our army, and in all respects as the man most fitted to be a general. I have

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

my picket, so all my company had a good opportunity of seeing the women whom they had fought for—alas, too many of them were widows. Their faces bespoke privations, bad food and illness, and their careworn features told us not only of bodily suffering but of sorrow bravely endured. Amongst this long straggling crowd were widows and orphans left by gallant soldiers who had nobly died for England in the defence of the place. Let us hope that these helpless women and their children were all well provided for by the country for whom their husbands and their fathers had so gallantly fought. Many of the women were heavily laden with bundles, and some had large bags filled with rupees which weighed them down. Many upon finding themselves safe amongst the relieving army put down their babies and their parcels to converse with my men. But I had to remind them that although hidden from the enemy's view they had no protection there from his round shot. In fact, I had to hurry them along. They seemed too sad and down in their luck to manifest any joy at their escape. A very few drove in buggies drawn by attenuated horses. I did not see a happy or a contented or a smiling face amongst that crowd; not one of them said a gracious word to the soldiers who had saved them, a fact which my men remarked upon. Indeed, poor creatures, they did not make a favourable impression upon any of us, for they seemed cross; they certainly grumbled much at everything and everybody.

November 22, 1857, found me still on picket on the path we had opened out between the garrison and the relieving force. One incident struck me as illustrating the indifference to human life that war tends to engender. During that afternoon a captain of my battalion, who belonged to

## A GREAT EXPLOSION

the besieged garrison, marched out with his company in charge of the State prisoners. Upon reaching my post, he halted to count them as they went past to assure himself they were all there. As the last man of his company approached—he was well known as a good fighting soldier but not of irreproachable character—one prisoner was missing. My friend and comrade was dreadfully distressed, and called out to the soldier, "Where's your prisoner?" The reply came at once, "We had great difficulty in getting him along, sir, and at last he stopped altogether and refused to go any further, so I was obliged to shoot him."

To him the whole affair seemed a mere matter of no moment. I am afraid that warfare, especially of the nature we were then engaged in, tends much to blunt man's best feelings, though it also develops the noblest man is capable of.

My company did not move off until all the garrison had passed out. Then the three *Transit* companies of the 90th Light Infantry marched silently away and rejoined our regimental headquarters after an absence from it of over seven months. When we had reached the Martiniere, I was ordered to halt and pile arms not far from a deserted battery of the enemy's. It was now daylight, and most of us were soon asleep; I know I was. I was roused suddenly by something hitting me in the face, a small clod of earth I think, and upon jumping to my feet I saw a huge cloud of white smoke rising up from this battery. There was no explosion, so it must have been a quantity of loose powder that had been accidentally ignited by some careless smoker. A blackened object rushed madly from this smoke, and when in a few minutes afterwards I saw the poor fellow lying before me, he said he was Private Pierce—my plucky and faithful servant

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

A few hours after my arrival, I heard from our advanced scouts that messengers had just come with a letter from the Ashantee King. They had halted about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles north of the river to await orders. Brought into our camp they were lodged in a good hut under a guard. The Naval Brigade, hale, hearty and in the best of spirits reached Prahsu the following morning, no man having fallen out since leaving the coast. They were marched past the huts in which the members of the Ashantee Embassy were kept under a guard, and deployed into line in front of it, in the hope that the presence of white troops might impress them.

As my bridge was to be passable on January 5, I resolved to detain these messengers until they could return by it, and sent forward Russell's Regiment to a village some miles distant, through which they would have to pass on their return journey. I hoped the report of these facts might make King Koffee realize that war was intended unless my terms were accepted.

Subsequently, I had them shown the Gatling gun in action. The sharp roar of its fire, the precision of its aim and the way in which its bullets threw up the water all round the target in the river, impressed them; at least I thought so. That same night I was roused by a shot fired close to me. The guard over the "Embassy" were talking loudly, and upon inquiry I learnt that one of the party had shot himself. His brother, who was the chief amongst them, said he had been brooding over his position and believed we meant to kill him. Permission was given his friends to bury him on the north bank of the Prah, in Ashantee territory. I was able to send the funeral over by the bridge which was just made passable. Each of the Ashantees who attended the ceremony threw sand on the body before they covered up the grave.

## CLIMATE OF PRAHSU

My answer to King Koffee stated the terms upon which I would make peace. I warned him that I was about to invade his kingdom from four different points : by the Wassah road, from Prahsu, from western and also from eastern Akim to enforce those terms should he refuse to accept them. I impressed upon him that hitherto his soldiers had only fought against black men helped by Englishmen, but that unless he hastened to accept my terms he would have to meet an army of white troops.

Up to the last I honestly did all I thought most likely to secure a good and promising peace without fighting. I felt quite certain of victory, as who would not have done with the men I had about me ? I did not mind much how many I might lose in action, for soldiers are made to die there—and oh ! how fortunate they are who do so—but I was well aware that every extra day's detention in that deadly climate meant grievous sickness to hundreds, and death to many. This loss of life from disease was the factor in my calculation most difficult to deal with, and always the most horrible to contemplate.

I was agreeably surprised to find the climate of Prahsu so pleasant. We had only had one day's rain since leaving Cape Coast Castle, and as the Harmattan wind had set in, there was so little moisture in the air that the skin soon assumed its normal condition. The days were hot, of course, but the nights were positively cool and conducive to sleep. At night the Great Bear and the Southern Cross both lit up the camp, making the scene even more than usually picturesque. There was nothing wanting to make it quite beautiful but horses, and their absence was felt for many reasons. But no horses would live long there, nor could we have found suitable food for them.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

The transport difficulties were now at their height; all the carriers intended for the Welsh Fusiliers had bolted in a body, and every post brought me news of further desertions. In fact, the black men of our protectorate still firmly believed that the Ashantees would "make mince-meat of us." I was for the nonce compelled to stop all further disembarkation of troops, and in order not to interfere with the formation of reserve supplies at Prahsu, I had for the moment to convert the West India soldiers and all of Wood's Regiment into carriers. The load of the carrier in the protectorate was only 50 lbs., so the daily labour imposed was not excessive, and those soldiers whilst so employed received extra pay.

The Commissariat Department had promised I should have ample provisions for the campaign at Prahsu by January 15, the date I had fixed for crossing the Prah River. This failure in our transport arrangements made me all the more anxious to obtain a good peace without fighting, although I was well aware what a grievous disappointment that would be to all the ardent spirits surrounding and helping me.

I felt my position deeply, for it was truly humiliating to be at the mercy of these worthless and contemptible Fantees. However, being of a hopeful temperament and imbued with the firmest trust in God's assistance, I put on a smiling face and met my difficulties with a sort of defiance. In the Red River Expedition I had to bring back my regular troops over a range of mountains before ice should close the lakes and rivers, and here, in equatorial Africa, I was again pressed by Time's inexorable clock, having to accomplish my task before the great rains set in.

Major Colley had already begun to evolve order out of confusion. For a long time he had 10,000 carriers in pay, and



## SIR ANTHONY HOME, 1873

the system he established soon began to work with a mechanical precision. Thanks to him the delay occasioned by the previous want of system was soon rectified.

Throughout these early operations I had the good fortune to have with me Sir Anthony Home, V.C., one of the ablest and most hard-working of military doctors I ever knew ; a man who loved his profession and who never spared himself in any way. He had been surgeon to my battalion during the Indian Mutiny, and was as remarkable for his coolness under fire as for his medical skill. He was a serious thinker and a well read companion whom it was always a real pleasure to be with. Inclined, however, by disposition and innate caution to take rather a sad than a bright view of life, when he told any of my special service officers they had fever and must take to their beds they were wont to resent his decision. He was always right, however, though this "never give in" trait in their character was much to their credit, and contributed largely and directly to the success of the war. All were afraid to go near Dr. Home when they felt a little out of sorts lest he should put them on the sick list, and worse still, send them home or even to Madeira for a trip. In many instances I had to order men to go on the sick list who, although in a high fever, had positively refused to admit there was anything wrong with them.

Towards the end of October, a dear friend, a congenial spirit, an old and trusted comrade, Captain, now General Sir William Butler, had joined me at Cape Coast Castle. He had done right good service during our Expedition to the Red River, where I came to know him well, to admire his brilliant ability and to value his friendship highly. Possessing the warmest and most chivalrous of hearts, had he lived in mediaeval times, he would have been the knight errant of

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

every one in distress. Sympathy for all human, indeed for all animal suffering, was in him an active living force, always striving to help the poor in body, and to comfort the weak-hearted. A loyal subject of the Crown, he yet always entertained a heartfelt sympathy for those whom he believed to be of a down-trodden race, and a lost cause appealed to all his deepest feelings. He was the first to recommend the raising of a regiment of Irish Foot Guards, and he has lived to see carried out what he was scouted at and ridiculed for by some unwise men at the time. Amongst my many comrades he was remarkable for that inestimable gift in a commander, a keenly bright and lively imagination, an essential quality in which it would seem we were somewhat deficient during our recent long war in South Africa.

He was just the soldier I wanted for a mission to the King of Western Akim. He possessed all the qualities required for such an independent undertaking. Of an iron constitution and indomitable energy, he was also an experienced traveller in wild and little known lands. In him the daring of his race was tempered by discretion, whilst a rare originality helped the ambition which burned within him. Above all things, he would be on this mission his own master.

He reached Accra in a gunboat on November 4, and at once started inland to find the miserable creature styled the King of Akim, who had been informed of his mission. His orders were to induce that royal personage to close in upon Amanquatia's army, then trying to re-cross into Ashantee at Prahsu, where the river was wide and at that time unfordable. He soon discovered that the King and all his male relatives were arrant cowards, and that his subjects resembled their sovereign in that respect. In fact, the Akim monarch's army was a sham, and its behaviour reminded one of the

## SIR WILLIAM BUTLER, 1873

negro burlesques which often afford amusement at country fairs.

Unable to induce the King to fulfil his promise to invade Ashantee, Captain Butler, to show him how sacred was the word of a British officer, crossed the Prah near Berouassee on the day fixed for doing so, having with him only a couple of British officers and a few Fantee policemen! The place of crossing was about thirty miles above Prahsu, and about a like distance below the point where Captain Glover crossed it at the same time. The last-named officer was also unsuccessful in inducing the local "braves" to whom he had been commissioned to cross the Prah, but he took with him into Ashantee 800 well armed and fairly trained Houssas who were reliable as fighting men.

No one ever worked harder or under greater difficulties than Captain Butler in this campaign. Though suffering from fever he would not give in, and in the end, after many heart-breaking delays, he at last succeeded in persuading this chicken-hearted King and his noisy rabble to cross the "Sacred River" also.

On January 27, with about 14,000 of these useless rascals, he reached Akim, not more than twenty miles east of the road by which our army was advancing upon Koomassee. There he found himself near the Ashantee outposts, a fact which so alarmed his wretched following that the King of Akim and his chiefs resolved to retreat. They packed up their small amount of baggage in a hurry and off they went to the rear. No remonstrances had any effect. They were afraid of the Ashantees; that was enough, and so ended Captain Butler's mission to the King of Western Akim.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I do not know a more pitiful story than that told by Sir William Butler in his book, *Akimfoo, the History of a Failure*. He and his

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

Although neither he nor Captain Glover was able to engage the Ashantee army, I have no doubt the news received at Koomassee of their having crossed the Prah about the same time as the main army, and of their having marched towards that city, each with a considerable following, had an effect upon the nerves of King Koffee and his chiefs.

Captain Glover had as much difficulty with the Akim kings as Captain Butler had encountered, notwithstanding his long previous experience in the ways of the West Coast rulers. He and the other officers with him never spared themselves. They worked hard and bravely under great difficulties and deserved success, but it was not destined to crown their efforts.

Captain Glover was informed by me on December 11, 1873, how affairs stood on the Cape Coast Castle-Koomassee road. He was told I could not have everything ready to cross at Prahsu before January 15, 1874, upon which day I expected him to be also on the Prah. I left him "the fullest latitude in the selection of the points on the Prah where you will cross that river," etc. His answer of December 14 to that letter was, "I shall be established on the banks of the River Prah by January 15, with all the available force that I may be enabled to assemble. Bozoroo, in Eastern Akim, one day's journey in rear of river Prah, will be my principal depôt from which my advance will be on Juabin."

But in this forecast he was doomed to disappointment; and yet there was no man who could influence those cowardly fellows as he could. If his knowledge of the country and its

gallant companions, Captains Brabazon and Paget, though all struck down by the terrible fever which rages in the dark forests of that gold-bearing country, struggled manfully on under every species of heart-breaking disappointment.

## CAPTAIN GLOVER'S OPERATIONS

people, joined to a tireless energy, indomitable pluck, and great tact in dealing with natives could not secure their obedience, it was of no use for any one else to hope for success.

He wrote to me on December 22 that he saw no possibility of being able to cross the Prah before February 1. As I read that statement I pitied him with all my heart, for I well understood how much that confession of failure must have cost a brave and sanguine man. I knew he cordially wished to co-operate with me and to help in the great object which I had been sent out to achieve, but he had trusted the worthless negro chiefs and they had deceived him. My answer was a positive order that with all the Houssas and disciplined troops at his disposal he was to move without delay by the shortest route to the point on the Prah he had previously selected to cross at. In a private note of the same date I explained my plans and pressed upon him the fact that the first object was to defeat the Ashantee army as soon as possible, and having done this to send home the British troops without delay. "You will, therefore," I said, "make this your one object. If necessary to its attainment, you will break off all operations on the east bank of the Volta, which have no direct bearing upon the main issue." I wound up by saying plainly: "Unless you can accomplish this, no matter what may be your success with the Awoonbas, you must clearly see that, as far as this war between England and Ashantee is concerned, you might just as well be operating on the Zanzibar coast as in the Awoonba district." I added: "From what I know of you, I feel that if what I require of you could be accomplished by any one it will be so by you." It cost me much to write this, for I sincerely felt for all his disappointed hopes, but I was responsible for

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

the main issue at stake, and that came before all other considerations. He would not have been human had he not felt how much my orders upset—at least for the time—all his own great plans for the future. But like a gentleman, having pointed out to me the dangers he conceived I was deliberately incurring, he obeyed orders, and did all he could—though much was not in his power—to further the object I had in view.

A bridge head was constructed on the north bank of the river at Prahsu, and Russell's Regiment was sent to garrison it. Lord Gifford with his scouts, always about ten miles ahead of the army, was now in daily touch with the enemy.

The Ashantee Embassy started on their return journey on January 6. I hoped their report to the King, that when on the march they had passed through a column of white men moving towards Koomassee, might induce him and his Ministers to believe that we had already begun the invasion of his kingdom. As soon as the Embassy with all its belongings was well out of sight, the Naval Brigade were to return to Prahsu.

The envoy looked terrified as he passed through the Naval Brigade, and sent me back a message to beg I would advance no further until I had received his King's answer. It reached me on January 12, and with it came one of the German missionaries who had been a prisoner in Koomassee for nearly four years. What he had to tell, though very interesting, was of little value to me. The refrain of the King's letter was an earnest appeal, that to "prevent further misunderstandings" I should not advance beyond my present camp, "for fear of meeting some of my (his) captains as to cause fighting." He begged to be allowed to keep Mr. Dawson with him as the only person he had who could write

## LETTERS TO AND FROM KING KOFFEE

and interpret English letters. What he wanted was, he said, a treaty of peace.

I sent back the messengers next day to the King with my answer, in which I expressed my pleasure at his desire for peace. But I could not, I said, proceed further with negotiations until he had sent me the other prisoners detained at Koomassee. I reminded him that I had already told him the terms upon which I was prepared to make peace, and that until they were complied with I could not "halt any of my four armies" then advancing upon Koomassee. I added, that with a view to the future maintenance of peace it was essential that he and his people should clearly understand that they could no more prevent an English army from marching into his territory, whenever his hostile proceedings might make such a step necessary, than he could stop the sun from rising daily.

This second letter from the King showed how much the passage of his previous messengers through a body of white troops on the march towards Koomassee had seriously affected his nerves.

By January 14, Lord Gifford with his scouts and a company of Russell's Regiment had reached the foot of the Adansee hills, some twenty miles from Prahsu on the Koomassee road. The remainder of Russell's Regiment was close behind. That same day a strong detachment of the 2nd West India Regiment, followed the day after by Rait's Artillery and Wood's Regiment, crossed at Prahsu. This force, which constituted my advanced guard under Colonel McLeod, of the Royal Highlanders, seized the Adansee hills on January 15, the enemy's scouting parties falling back before it.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### The Ashantee War

**M**Y headquarters crossed the Prah on January 20, that was five days later than my original calculation. But as I met with no resistance at first, I was able to reach the Adansee hills as early as I had originally reckoned upon. I was indeed glad to leave Prahsu behind—pretty as that clearance was with all its busy camp life—to dive into the depths of the dark, mysterious forest which now lay between us and our goal, the Ashantee capital.

The satisfaction of feeling that we had at last begun our invasion of the Ashantee kingdom was, however, sadly marred by the death that day from fever and dysentery of Captain Huyshe, of the Rifle Brigade. He had worked unremittingly towards the accomplishment of that invasion, but Providence decreed he was not to see it. He had been my aide de camp during the Red River Expedition, and up to his falling ill at Prahsu, he had zealously discharged the intelligence and topographical duties with great advantage to the public service. From my personal intercourse with him I had come to know his fine, soldierly qualities. A thorough gentleman and a keen soldier, he lies buried beneath a great cotton tree at Prahsu.

My white soldiers and sailors had no longer the comfortable huts fitted with bedsteads which had been provided for them



## COMMODORE SIR W. HEWETT

at every station south of the Prah. Until they returned to Prahsu they had to sleep on the damp soil, of decaying and decayed vegetable matter. This was injurious to the white man's health, and our soldiers soon began to suffer from fevers in consequence. My sick list grew larger every day, making me more anxious than ever to end the war with all possible haste.

At Accrafoomu, our second stage beyond the Prah, I was joined by Commodore Sir William Hewett, V.C. He commanded the naval squadron on the coast, and was the cheeriest and best of lion-hearted comrades. He had done everything man could do to help us, indeed I never asked him for anything he did not freely give, allowing none of what always appears to soldiers the curious and incomprehensible niceties of naval etiquette to interfere with what he felt to be for the general good of the Queen's Service. He was very highly esteemed by his own men, and he soon became equally so by all ranks of the army. Upon his arrival in camp he was warmly and loudly cheered by all. No one could know him without becoming personally attached to him, and no soldier or sailor could be with him in action without being proud of him as a comrade and as a fellow countryman.

Soon after crossing the Prah, we found a white cord stretched from tree to tree along our road. It was evidently meant as a fetish; a native report said the idea had been taken from our telegraph wire, which the Ashantees believed to be a great English fetish.

The dense forests through which our road now lay are very fine. They may be the breeding ground of deadly diseases, but they are truly beautiful to look upon. They consist of what I may describe as three distinct stories. The ground-floor story is made up of the ordinary close, tropical bush, of

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

from fifteen to twenty feet in height, through which the true forest trees of equatorial Africa push their thick lofty stems and big branches to form the second story. These are of about the same size as the great forest trees of Western Europe. The third story, towering over and far above the other two, is formed by the straight and smooth-stemmed cotton tree, with its mushroom-shaped roof, many being over one hundred and fifty feet in height. The big parrots of this region when perched upon them look no larger than English robins. This tree has no branches until close to the top of its pillar-like stem, where they shoot out almost horizontally, like the iron stays of a great and shallow umbrella. A large inverted green saucer placed on the nozzle of a tall and massive silver candlestick, would convey a good idea of what the cotton tree looks like. Its polished stem of soft and pearly grey tapers little, and being great in circumference all the way up to where the branches spring from it resembles in shape the "tall bully" that "lifts its head and lies" near London Bridge. The round stand of the candlestick represents the roots. They go little into the ground, but mostly rest upon it as the stand of the candlestick rests upon a table. Rising up from the outer edge of that stand are great projecting buttresses often covering a circle of ground that would measure a couple of hundred feet in circumference. Those ribbed buttresses add much to the stability of the tree and to the magnificence of its imposing appearance. No one of these trees, can, I believe, stand alone if you cut down the two lower stories of forest growth which surround and shelter it from the wind.

But what strikes the stranger most in this weirdly-dark forest scenery, are the thousands of twisted creepers and winders of all shapes and sizes which cross and recross one another, the smaller ones hanging in tangled masses festooned

## THE ASHANTEE FOREST

between the trees, like the tangled locks of some giant Meg Merillies. Many of these creepers are thicker than a man's wrist, and to get through this lower jungle you must cut them, for none will break. Twisted round them again, are usually others of a tougher and more cordlike quality which compress the expansion of those round which they twine, pinching them into the spiral regularity of a corkscrew. These great winders hanging from branch to branch in vast quantities, at every angle and in puzzling irregularity, bar the way to all who would pass in any direction. They are like the stout wire netting with which ships of war protect themselves against torpedoes. Look down any chance opening in the depths of this awe-inspiring forest of green and dripping foliage, and as the gentle wind sways about these ropes and coils of brown creepers, one thinks of the loose shrouds, broken stays and halyards and confused mass of rigging that hang from yard and mast of the old and once beautiful "three deckers" still to be seen as ruins in the neglected backwaters of our naval harbours.

The surface of these forests is strewn with fallen timber of all shapes and sizes, the accumulation of ages, piled there pell mell like so many spilikins and in every gradation of vegetable decay. Through them and around them spring up at places myriads of brightly coloured flowers and huge sombre ferns. Practically, all progress through these forests is impossible for troops, and even for an individual it is slow in the extreme and most fatiguing.

Plants hidden from all sunlight soon lose colour and if the native races who live in or have daily to traverse these dark jungles are constituted as we are, they ought to be a sad non-laughing people. There is something indescribably ghostly in the midday twilight of these forests. It was depressing,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

uncanny work to march long distances through them, or to live amidst such a tangled steamy mass of perpetual green, where you can only see a few yards ahead, and where little sunlight ever penetrates to brighten the path or to gladden the wayfarer. I never saw an animal during our march to Koomassee, not even a rat or a snake, though I was told there were many of both. But if animals are rare, columns of ants in myriads cross your path everywhere with all the earnestness of serious occupation for which that industrious race is proverbial.

Headquarters reached Moinsee at the foot of the Adansee hills, January 23, 1874, where I met messengers with a letter from King Koffee and with the remainder of the European prisoners, consisting of the Frenchman, Mr. Bonnat, and of Mr. and Mrs. Ramseyer with two children, one a baby recently born. Having thus obtained their release I felt myself much freer to act. In this letter the king said he would pay the £200,000 I had demanded, but expressed grief at our rapid advance and begged me to stop. My answer was that for the present I would advance but slowly to give him time to comply with the preliminary terms of the treaty, which were : the immediate release of the Fantee prisoners whom he still detained at Koomassee : that pending the conclusion of peace he should send me as hostages his mother and also the brother who was his heir : and the immediate delivery of one half of the gold he had now agreed to pay. That when he had complied with these terms I would halt the army and proceed to Koomassee with a guard of 500 British soldiers to sign the treaty. It was for him to decide whether I went there as a friend or as an enemy.

Two days later Headquarters were moved to the nice clean town of Fommanah, beyond the Adansee hills, where I halted

## THE ADANSEE HILLS

four days to form a supply depôt and to close up the troops from the rear. The delay would also show King Koffee that I meant to keep to my promise of advancing slowly in order to give him time to arrange for complying with my demands. Thanks to the untiring energy of Captain Home, the road so far was well cut, every stream being bridged. Entrenchments had been constructed at all the stations beyond the fortified bridgehead at Prahsu, and large storehouses had been erected at each of them. These places were made secure from any attack the enemy knew how to make upon them.

Fommanah possesses a very tidy palace and several good well-kept houses. I was much surprised to find so many signs of civilization in it. The houses have much steeper roofs than are to be seen near the coast ; the house I occupied was quite a pleasant residence.

The scenery on and around the Adansee hills was delightful. We seemed to breathe more freely on that elevated ground, where also the forest was much less thick and dreary. The day I reached Moinsee Captain Butler was at Enoonsu, about twenty miles east-north-east of Fommanah, with a small force of Western Akims : Captain Glover with a strong battalion of Houssas at Abogoo, some forty miles north-east of that same place, and Captains Moore and Dalrymple at Kotakee, west of the Prah, about twelve miles south-west of Prahsu and some thirty miles south of Fommanah. The presence of these officers in Ashantee must have told upon King Koffee's nerves, although their columns, being composed exclusively of natives, were not dreaded like the British force then marching straight for the capital and already within thirty miles of it.

Fommanah and all the surrounding villages were deserted.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

No inhabitants were to be found anywhere, though we knew we were closely watched by Ashantee scouts in all directions. There, however, rumours reached me through spies, and they were corroborated by the prisoners we captured daily, that the enemy were collecting in great force at Amoaful under Amanquatia. That place was only about thirteen or fourteen miles further on towards Koomassee, and my advanced guard was already at a village about half way between it and Fommanah. I halted four days at Fommanah to collect supplies to enable me to push forward rapidly when the moment came for the capture of Koomassee, and my doing so also fitted in with the general tenour of my communications with the King. If he meant peace, as he said he did, my stay at Fommanah would seem a concession to his earnest request that I should do so.

January 29 I pushed forward my Headquarters about seven or eight miles, and as I was in the act of camping received further letters from the King begging me to halt. Within ten minutes of the messenger's arrival he was on his return journey with my answer. It was to the effect that having thus halted at Fommanah to please him—may God forgive me that fib—and to give him time to carry out the terms of peace he had agreed to, I now found he had used that time in collecting an army to fight. I would therefore halt no more.

Mr. Dawson—the native interpreter I had left with the King for the convenience of correspondence—said in a note: "See 2 Cor. ii. 11." That verse is: "*Lest Satan should get an advantage of us : for we are not ignorant of his devices.*" He evidently intended to warn me against treachery, and I gathered from the general tenour of his communication that the King meant to fight. On January 29, the Adansees

## CAPTAIN REDVERS BULLER

were cleared out of the position they had taken up to the westward of the main road. The affair was a complete success, but I had one officer killed, Captain Nichol, the adjutant of the Hants Militia, who was an elderly man. He lost his life through his humane feeling, for had he not restrained our men from firing there would have been no enemy left in the direction from which the bullet came that killed him. The enemy left behind about fifty of their dead, so their total loss in killed and wounded must have been heavy. Several Ashantees were taken, a slave woman amongst them, whose master before he bolted had tried to shoot her. He had fired twice, hitting her both times. She said the King had promised his chiefs he would take the field himself, and she was certain that he meant to come by the main road. Our surgeon extracted all but one of the slugs her brutal master had hit her with, and we gave her clothing to cover her absolute nakedness.

That most zealous of "Intelligence" officers, Captain Redvers Buller, had sent an Ashantee spy into the enemy's camp the evening before, from whom he learnt that the main force of the enemy was on rising ground about one mile short of the village of Amoaful. He described their position well. They intended to follow their usual battle tactics, that of drawing on their enemy in front and when they had succeeded in doing so, to pounce upon his flanks and so cut off his reserves in rear.

It was a great relief to all my comrades to feel that the question of "peace or war"—so often debated amongst them—was solved at last, for it was now evident the King meant to fight. His pretended negotiations were only designed to throw me off my guard in order to give him a better opportunity of destroying us at a disadvantage. He had

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

utterly failed in this object, and also in his endeavours to induce me to halt.<sup>1</sup> The halts I made were absolutely necessary to enable me to construct the road, to bridge the many streams we had to cross, and to bring up sufficient supplies of food and ammunition for the advance upon Koomassee, and also for the return journey to the coast. I had endeavoured to make King Koffee believe that my halts were made as a concession to his urgent requests on the subject, but had I been absolutely certain from the first that he meant to fight I could not have met him at Amoaful a day earlier. I had offered him fair terms, but neither he nor his chiefs would accept them because they firmly believed they could destroy any army with which we could cross the Prah. And now, when upon the point of attacking him in the position he had selected, I felt my men were fully equal to the task before them. My communications with Prahsu were protected by eight fortified posts, all well manned and provisioned, and quite able to resist any attack an enemy without artillery could make upon them. I was sorry he had not selected a position nearer his capital, for my desire was to deliver my decisive blow sufficiently near it to admit of my pursuing the beaten army into its streets, and to take possession of it as the immediate result of a victory. I was anxious to finish the war with one big fight : but the King's determination to fight at Amoaful made it tolerably certain I should have two battles, which was a disappointment. Throughout this war my one longing was to end it with all possible speed, as every extra day it lasted, meant more deaths from fever. This thought was never absent from my mind.

My little army breakfasted early, and moved off at day-

<sup>1</sup> I afterwards learnt the Ashantees nicknamed me "The man who would not stop."



## BATTLE OF AMOAFUL

break on January 31, 1874, all ranks feeling they had a tough job before them that day. I was convinced we should be attacked in flank and rear by the enemy, as their immense superiority in numbers would enable them to carry out to the fullest extent their favourite tactics of surrounding the army opposed to them, and my force was too small to prevent it. I determined therefore to advance in what I may describe as a large open square formation, each side having its own selected commander. The position to be occupied by each battalion was carefully explained to each commanding officer. The front fighting line was to be between six and seven hundred yards in width, its centre being marked by Rait's guns on or near the Koomassee road. The rockets were to be at the front angles of the parallelogram. The troops on the side faces were to cut paths as they pushed forward through the underscrub each at a distance of about three hundred yards from the road. My force was too small to enable me to prevent the enemy from getting all round us, and he had also the great advantage of being able to move easily through the dense forest where we could only pass by cutting paths, a slow, difficult and dangerous operation. It is only very brave and highly disciplined troops having great confidence in one another who could be trusted to fight such an enemy under these conditions. In the semi-darkness of those jungle recesses, the nerves are tried by the feeling that you are more or less cut off from any immediate support, and by hearing the triumphant shouts of a barbarous, inhuman enemy on all sides. But I knew my men : I had tried them and had no hesitation in trusting them.

In early youth I had fought through the beautiful jungles of Burmah, where a luxuriant undergrowth afforded the enemy good cover. I recall their bright cheerfulness with pleasure,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

for (when I had enough to eat) I thoroughly enjoyed campaigning in them. There was nothing weird or mysterious in their thickest recesses, and the sun's bright rays pierced through them everywhere. But here, in the gloomy shade of this mighty, solemn Ashantee forest, how different ! How sobering to the highest spirits was its dim, shadowless gloom. Rank earth-smelling dampness pervaded it, and soft slimy depressions in the ground, whence oozed black, oily mud, marked the course of what were streams at times. It seemed indeed, that " brooding darkness spread his jealous wings " to protect those " ebon shades " from the invader. If there be gnomes on earth who guard the dark recesses of nature, surely they must haunt these fever-breeding forests of Ashantee.

Two miles along a bad path took me to the few little huts which constituted the village of Quarman. The day's work began about 9 a.m. with some desultory firing in the vicinity of a small village called Eganasee, a couple of miles beyond Quarman. Lord Gifford with his scouts drove the enemy out with little difficulty, but sent back to say the Ashantees were in considerable force beyond the village. In cutting the paths for the side faces of the square poor Captain Buckle of the Royal Engineers was killed early in the day. He was a skilful soldier, a brave, determined and daring gentleman.

As soon as we began to move forward, it became apparent that the enemy meant to make a determined resistance. They evidently trusted in their great numerical superiority which enabled them to surround us, in the strength of their forest position and in their well-known fighting reputation. They all knew that their grandfathers had utterly destroyed Sir Charles MacCarthy's army in British territory, and if they reasoned at all, they must have felt how much easier it

## HARD PRESSED IN FRONT

would be to cut to pieces this new army that had dared to cross the sacred Prah, to penetrate into the interior of their country, and even to approach their fetish-guarded capital !

The fight soon raged loudly on all sides. It was curious sensation that of being fired into upon four faces of our big square by a howling mass of many, many thousands of savages, determined to kill us or to die in the attempt, and yet to be unable to see them in the dense bush beneath that awe-inspiring forest. Those who have fought only in the open can barely realize how unpleasant is such a position to the nerves of most men. The roar of musketry on all sides soon became deafening, and the smoke of the bad Ashantee powder hung heavily round us, there being no breath of wind in that thick forest to carry it away. Rait's guns were hard at work, and the loud hissing sound of the rockets as they rushed through the lower bush, striking trees and bursting among the enemy—as we all hoped—added to the interest and excitement of this strange and novel scene.

Reports from all quarters came in rapidly telling the same story: "many wounded," "hard pressed," "would like some support." From the rear came the news that our baggage had been attacked and the carriers had bolted. The Brigadier commanding the front face of the square subsequently described the situation between 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. as being "in the midst of a semi-circle of hostile fire, and we hardly ever caught sight of a man. As company after company of the Forty-second descended, with their pipes playing, into the ravine, they were almost immediately lost sight of in the bush; and their position could only be judged of from the sharp crack of their rifles in contradistinction to the loud, dull roar of the Ashantee musketry." It is not so easy as some may think to smile, look happy and thoroughly satisfied

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

as you peruse such reports amidst the booming of guns and a roar of small arms. I was in front of the native houses that constituted the village of Quarman, and as I walked up and down smoking cigar after cigar I felt that all neighbouring eyes were upon me. It was a curious sensation, especially when the enemy pressing in on the flanks pushed our men back at times. Not twenty yards off were several newspaper correspondents. One, Mr. Winwood Reid, a very cool and daring man, had gone forward with the fighting line. Of the others one soon attracted my attention by his remarkable coolness. It was Sir Henry Stanley, the famous traveller. A thoroughly good man, no noise, no danger ruffled his nerve, and he looked as cool and self-possessed as if he had been at "target practice." Time after time as I turned in his direction I saw him go down to a kneeling position to steady his rifle as he plied the most daring of the enemy with a never-failing aim. It is nearly thirty years ago, and I can still see before me the close-shut lips and determined expression of his manly face which—when he looked in my direction—told plainly I had near me an Englishman in plain clothes whom no danger could appal. Had I felt inclined to run away, the cool, firm, unflinching manliness of that face would have given me fresh courage. I had been previously somewhat prejudiced by others against him, but all such feelings were slain and buried at Amoaful. Ever since I have been proud to reckon him amongst the bravest of my comrades, and I hope he may not be offended if I add amongst my best friends also.

One of those near me, of whose nerves the other correspondents had no high opinion, gimleted me with his eyes as I walked backwards and forwards in a "quarter-deck" fashion. I smoked, tried to look "jolly," and even whistled

## A NERVOUS CORRESPONDENT

a tune at times to inspire confidence. But whatever I did, or wherever I turned, those unhappy-looking eyes followed me wistfully, and with a look that seemed to express, "I wonder when he is going to run away." This amused and soothed me, for I was somewhat over-wrought that day. The enemy's fire was very heavy at times, but fortunately for all of us, they did not use bullets, and their slugs, unless fired near you did not penetrate far. Some even failed to pierce the skin, but merely tore your clothing, and if the blow was not in a bad place it simply knocked you out of time for a few minutes. Indeed, many of us were hit hard several times by them during the course of the day without suffering serious harm.

For a long time little progress was made, although most of my reserves were already in action. But the awe of fighting in the darkness of a forest where the sun's rays never penetrated wore off by degrees, and we began to make progress slowly but surely in the direction of Amoafu village. It was only about two miles ahead, on the Koomassee road.

Rait's guns—constantly in action—were often not more than a hundred, and at times not more than fifty yards from crowds of the enemy who, however, clung closely to the bush.

The enemy fought well under the terrific fire we poured into them, and had they been armed with Snider rifles we must have been destroyed. As they fell back, bit by bit, the spirits of our men rose, and a British cheer at times told one things were looking brighter all round. The numerous messages which all through the morning kept coming in from every direction were no longer mere appeals for reinforcements: they were more confident in tone. As the booming of the enemy's heavily charged muskets grew fainter, our ranks pressed forward more eagerly.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

More than once the enemy pressed in heavily upon the village clearance where I was. But I would not allow the houses to be loopholed lest such a defensive precaution might cause any weak-hearted men to doubt, even for a moment, that success, complete success was not a certainty. Such little points are often of consequence, and, as it were intuitively, I at once felt the importance of this matter. Once the enemy nearly broke through into the clearance, for some companies of the battalion that faced the enemy there fell back. They were badly led, badly commanded, and the affair looked ugly for a moment: but in the twinkling of an eye I saw Commodore Hewett, who was near the spot, rush to the front and sword in hand lead them back into the bush, driving the Ashantee assailants before him. He was indeed a man to be relied on in any emergency, whether by land or sea! I had met him often in the batteries before Sebastopol when we were both very young, and where he established a great reputation for that glorious daring which was part and parcel of the man. He was just the commander for such a momentary crisis, and all ranks seemed to recognize the fact, for in an instant they were inspired by his splendid example and followed him as if he had long been their appointed leader.

The front line was commanded by Brigadier-General Sir A. Alison, whose objective was the village of Amoafu. It was taken at noon by a well-directed charge of the Black Watch, and I was glad to learn at the same time that it was large enough to afford cover for my little army with all its wounded.

Desultory fighting continued at several points until about 2 p.m. At three o'clock I heard from Major Colley, whom I had sent back to bring up the regimental baggage from In-sarfu that the enemy had seriously attacked Quarman,

## SIR GEORGE COLLEY

which was about half way to the former place. He drove them off, and proceeded on to Insarfu, where he picked up a large convoy of ammunition and provisions which covered about five miles of road. Upon his return journey, having this great convoy with him, upon again reaching Quarman he found the enemy making a fresh attack upon it, and it took some hard fighting to finally dispose of them. It was midnight before he rejoined me in the village of Amoaful. He had indeed had a hard day's work. But he was a man in a thousand, with an iron will and of inflexible determination, who would always work as long as there was still anything important to be done. And that day no man's work was more important. He had been about nineteen hours constantly employed before he lay down to have some sleep.

## CHAPTER XLIX

### The Enemy attack our Line of Communications

**I** DETERMINED to place Amoaful in a state of defence, and, leaving all my impedimenta there, to advance upon Koomassee, every man carrying two days' provisions on his person. Rations for two more days were to be carried by the spare hammock men of the regimental transport, and a fifth day's supply by the army transport. I calculated, that with these five days' rations, we should be able to fight once more and to take possession of King Koffee's capital, which was then only about fifteen miles off. It was fairly certain we should have this one more heavy stand-up fight before we obtained possession of Koomassee. As a matter of fact, we had to fight two serious engagements before it became ours. But whatever might be the nature or number of them, my hope was, they would lead to a peace. If, however, the King refused to yield, my intention was to raze his palace to the ground, to burn his city, and then fall back behind the Prah without delay. I expected this destruction of Koomassee would teach him that he could no longer reckon upon the protection afforded by his fever-stricken forests and by the courage of his soldiers, to keep us out of his dominions. This led me to hope that he would therefore be only too glad to make peace upon my terms. It is not, however, safe to reckon from European analogy what will



## HARD FIGHTING AT FOMMANAH

be the conduct of any African despot. The influences which act upon the educated man have little or no effect upon the savage of Equatorial Africa. And fortunate for England that it was so in this instance, for his refusal to accept my terms led to the destruction of the only dangerously strong native power in Western Africa, and consequently to the maintenance of peace in that deadly portion of our Empire.

My little army started from Amoaful at daybreak on February 2. We had no serious fighting throughout this day's march, though the advanced guard had much skirmishing at many points along the road. Our casualties were only three officers wounded and a few of other ranks killed and wounded. The village of Adwabin, where the advanced party of the advanced guard halted for the night, was not more than about three miles from the Ordah River, and perhaps a little under twelve miles from Koomassee. The advanced guard itself halted at Aggemmamu, where it was joined by the main body.

There had been some hard fighting this day along our line of communications. The enemy had made a determined attack upon Fommanah, at which place Colonel Colley arrived in the nick of time and assumed command. He had some difficulty in saving the hospital and storehouses, and the carriers were so panic-stricken by the heavy firing and the numbers wounded, that they could not be induced to leave with provisions for the front.

This was serious, for I now had only four days' supplies with the fighting force at Aggemmamu, but having appealed to the men to make those rations last for five days they responded most cheerfully to my request. Colonel Colley also undertook that I should have a fresh convoy of pro-

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

visions at that village in five days, and I knew that I could rely upon his promises.

This arrangement greatly freed my fighting force, when in action, from having to make detachments for the protection of provision columns. In several ways it helped me for this final dash upon Koomassee, where I had never contemplated staying more than two, or, at the outside, more than three or four days.

Aggemmam, where the main body halted for the night of February 2, was an important post, as two roads led thence to Koomassee. I selected the western and longer road because I understood it was the better and more important of the two. I had the village strongly entrenched for the small garrison I intended to leave in it. I could not afford more, but as the enemy had no artillery, I was able to take liberties in this respect which I could not otherwise have ventured upon.

On February 3 we moved off at daybreak, and when we reached Adwabin, where my advanced guard and Lord Gifford's scouts had spent the night, I pushed them forward under Colonel McLeod for the River Dah, or Ordah. The enemy surrounded them on their march, and whilst stoutly opposing their advance persistently attacked us in flank; but they no longer showed any desire to close with us: the lesson they had been taught at Amoaful had made them more careful. Upon reaching the Ordah, the enemy were found holding the high ground on the northern bank, where the well built village of Ordahsu, about 2,000 yards beyond the river, seemed to be the centre of their position.

Our advanced guard was soon heavily engaged, the enemy being in force. All the prisoners taken during the day asserted that we had in front of us an Ashantee army of

## REACH THE ORDAH RIVER

10,000 warriors, besides considerable bodies operating on our flanks and rear. A little before noon, when the main body had covered about three-quarters of the distance to the river, a flag of truce, with a letter from the King, reached me. In it he again begged me to halt, and promised he would consent to all my terms, but could not, he said, send me his old mother and young brother as hostages, because both were "his counsellors and helpers in every way." The messengers also brought me a letter from Mr. Dawson, who evidently wrote in abject terror for his life, entreating me to halt, and if I did so everything I asked would be conceded.

I knew I could not cross the Ordah, fight a battle, and get into Koomassee that evening, so although it was quite evident to me that the King merely wanted to gain time in order to collect his army and to help it to recover from the effects of the severe defeat it had experienced at Amoaful, I felt it advisable to temporize. Making, therefore, a virtue of necessity I consented to halt for the night on the river. Doing so would enable me to construct a bridge over it during the night, by which, unless he had in the meantime complied with my terms, I meant to cross at daybreak next morning. A very few minutes only were required to write and deliver the following answer to the royal messengers—

"12.10 p.m. February 3, 1874.

"On the March.

"KING,—

"You have deceived me so often before that I cannot halt until the hostages are in my possession. If you send them to me this evening I will halt my army this side of the River Ordah.

"As time presses, I will consent to accept for to-day your

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

mother and Prince Mensah. Both shall be well treated by me. You can trust my word. Unless you send them at once, my army shall march upon Koomassee.

(Signed) "G. J. WOLSELEY,  
"Major-General."

The royal messengers started at once with my answer, and we heard them, as they ran back, calling to their troops on both sides of the road not to fire. All skirmishing then ceased. I reached the Ordah about 3 p.m., and found it was a formidable stream of about twenty yards in width. Russell's Regiment was at once pushed across to construct a rough entrenchment and to cover the party who were to be employed during the night in making a bridge. The night was one of violent tornadoes and of rain in torrents; I never was out under heavier. It did not, however, prevent Captain Home and his Royal Engineers from working at the bridge throughout those long hours of pitchy darkness. No men ever worked harder or to better purpose, and it would be difficult to find a more remarkable officer than Captain Home, of whose character and abilities I have already said much.

It was an awful night, and the rain fell upon us like sheets of water. We had no tents or cover of any sort, and the blinding lightning added to our misery. I never spent a more wretched time in any bivouac. No fire would burn, and the ground was a soaking mass of mud, where few could find any sleep at all. Curiously enough, this was the first serious downpour of tropical rain we had experienced since we crossed the Prah. It was a source of great misery to every one, coming as it did so inopportunately the very night before we hoped to take Koomassee. Instead of being

## CONSTRUCT BRIDGE OVER ORDAH

thankful for the fine weather we had had throughout the campaign, misery made us ungratefully forget it, and we grumbled loudly because this one night of wretchedness had been dealt out to us from Dame Fortune's cheating pack of cards.

It seemed to be a very long night. But even the longest comes to an end, and daylight on February 4 found me at the bridge to see what progress had been made with it during that night of horrors. It was already passable, and nearly finished. The sappers—all round the handiest men we have by land or sea—had worked all through that dreadful night to good purpose. I congratulated Captain Home and his men in the most flattering terms I could use ; indeed, no praise could be too high for him and them.

My plan for the day was to pass the bridge at once with all the troops I had there, and to take the village of Ordahsu. Having taken it, to form a double line outwards from the road, and under its protection send on all the reserve ammunition, stores, food, wounded, etc., etc., into the village, which I would then make as strong as possible. Having thus collected all my impedimenta in Ordahsu under a sufficient guard, I meant to push boldly forward into Koomassie and seize it ; to make peace if I could, but should King Koffee prove recalcitrant, to blow up his palace, burn that great charnel house, the city itself, and forthwith quit the country. Heavy rains were to be expected at any early date, and I felt that to keep British troops in that fatal climate a day longer than was absolutely necessary would be criminal.

From the prisoners taken by our outposts during the night, I learnt that the whole Ashantee army was out to oppose me, most of it being then in my immediate front.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

I gave the King two hours of morning daylight to enable him to comply with my terms if he meant to do it. I did not expect he would, and I did so chiefly because my whole force was drenched with rain and cold with hunger. This short halt enabled them to light fires, dry their clothes, and have some hot tea and breakfast.

When we advanced across the river, about 6.30 a.m., we soon found ourselves in front of a force which was certainly as large as we had been told to expect. Everything considered, the distance from all effective help, the small amount of supplies we had to depend upon, the extreme unhealthiness of the climate, the courage and ferocity of the enemy, all combined to make the position of the general officer responsible for the safety of this little army somewhat trying. But I was vain enough to believe in my own judgment, and my confidence in the carefully chosen officers about me and in the rank and file was unlimited.

After the miserable night we had passed, we were not so early in the field this day as usual. But the sun, with its genial warmth and brightness in the morning hours of even a tropical day soon gladdens the bivouac. The soldier's memory is short, and the enjoyment of to-day soon blurs out for us all the disagreeable recollections of yesterday.

At about 7 a.m. the serious work of that eventful day began. To my intense annoyance I soon found that the general position of affairs, the knowledge that the great and famous Ashantee army, under its King, was in front of, and indeed, all round us, seemed now for the first time to seriously affect my native troops. A company of Wood's Native Regiment was the advanced party of the advanced guard, and the heavy fire from the enemy soon became too much for them. They lay down, firing recklessly at nothing and became

## DEATH OF GALLANT YOUNG EYRE

entirely "out of hand." The Rifle Brigade took their place at the head of the column, and one of Rait's guns was brought effectively into action. Loud cheers and great beating of war drums on our right warned us of what was evidently a large force of the enemy in that direction. This noise was soon followed by a heavy fire, from which we suffered. It ended the days of a gallant spirit. Young Eyre, of the 90th Light Infantry, was the only son of General Sir William Eyre, who, famous for his daring courage, had distinguished himself before Sebastopol. I helped to bury the boy there and then, where he fell, whilst friends and foes together fired volleys at the moment, as if to honour the gallant spirit that had left us. As we scraped some rubbish over his grave to conceal the spot, I thought of his widowed mother waiting anxiously at home for the return of her only boy, whose still warm body we thus buried under fire, and whom she was never to see again in this world. Through death man wins eternal life, and it is by the deeds of men like gallant Eyre, who have given their lives in action for England all round the globe, that our great empire has arisen and been created.

At 9 a.m., after about two unpleasant hours of hard fighting and slow progress, the village of Ordahsu was in our possession, though the enemy, defiant as ever, still surrounded it on three sides. All our reserve stores of every nature were now quickly and safely passed through the double line of troops I had formed between the river and the village. The enemy held in force some ravines which came down from the upper level to the river, and from them they made fierce onslaughts upon what I may call my "covered way" between the bridge and the village. Regarding this and subsequent events throughout the day, I find it noted in

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

my private journal that although the enemy were more numerous than at Amoafu, and stoutly strove to bar our road, they did not seem to fight with the spirit or assurance they had displayed on the previous occasion.

About 11 a.m. a most determined effort to retake Ordahsu was made by the enemy from the north, east, and west, whilst they strove to break into my covered way to the south, along which the reserve stores were still then being sent into the village with all haste. The brigadier reported that he wanted help in Ordahsu, but there was no use in sending him native troops, as he said he could do nothing with them under such a fire. A little after 11 a.m. I transferred my headquarters from the neighbourhood of the bridge to the village. For an hour after I had entered it the place was a regular "inferno." Rait's guns in action, a deafening roar of musketry on all sides, and the loud banging of many thousands of the enemy's muskets, fired as fast as they could load them, all round the outside of the place.

The enemy now and then pressed in close to us with loud shouts and war cries, but steady volleys from our deadly Sniders stopped and silenced them. So near did they come at one moment that Colonel Greaves, my chief of the staff, emptied his revolver amongst them.

For some time it may be said to have rained slugs upon us, and few escaped being hurt by them. By noon, however, I had all my stores well stacked in the village, which by this time had been placed in a state of defence. We were still over six miles from Koomassee, so I felt the time had come for my final advance upon it.

For the honour of breaking through the masses of the enemy that crowded the road leading to King Koffee's capital, I selected my best battalion, the Black Watch. No



## RAIT'S GUNS IN ACTION

finer body of men, with more gallant officers, or under a better or more determined leader than Colonel McLeod, were ever sent upon such a mission. Rait's guns raked the road with a heavy shell fire, whilst volley after volley of musketry must have slain hundreds, and thus helped to open a path for these splendid Highlanders. The orders I gave Colonel McLeod were to disregard all flank attacks as much as possible, and to push forward straight for Koomassee. I would support him by every man I had who was not absolutely required for the defence of Ordahsu and of the stores collected there, upon which indeed our lives depended.

It was inspiring to see this distinguished Scottish gentleman sally suddenly forth from the village at the head of his historic Highlanders, their pipes playing the old warlike music of Scotland, all ranks knowing full well that come what might they must sleep that night at Koomassee or die on the road to it. Of ambuscades many were encountered and each taken with a rush ; for what were such obstacles to men like those of the Black Watch ! They were for the first moment as they pushed forward from Ordahsu, met with a terrific fire : many fell wounded, but nothing could stop them. The Ashantees seemed at last to realize this, for the shouting in front ceased for a moment as they fled in all directions in wild confusion. A short halt was made when half way to the city, for the men were blown, hungry, and tired.

Brigadier-General Sir Archibald Alison and his staff accompanied this advance, and were with the first that entered Koomassee, that terrible city whose streets had at all times reeked with the blood of human sacrifices.

Whilst this advance was proceeding I withdrew all the troops between our bridge and Ordahsu into that village.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

for our dhoolies, already tolerably full of sun-stricken men. As soon as we had deployed, an advance was made upon the position taken up by the enemy's infantry and guns. Their horse made several charges upon the flanks of our infantry. A squadron of the 7th Hussars charged them, both sides met at full tilt, and we lost several men. At the moment I was engaged in posting two companies of the Bengal Fusiliers to protect the flank where our baggage was being collected. The fusiliers stood well, and received them with a well delivered volley that emptied many saddles. The enemy had charged well home; indeed, one of their sowars was killed amongst our dhoolies. The whole affair was creditable to Sir Hope Grant and to his commanding officers, and I find it noted in a letter I wrote home that same day that it was the first occasion upon which I had seen the enemy face us bravely in the open. I believe it was because of the Moulvee's presence, as his followers had absolute faith in that holy man's invincibility.

Having broken up the Moulvee's force and so destroyed his claim to invincibility, Sir Hope Grant was ordered to Poorwa, a village of some importance about thirty miles south of Lucknow, to protect the Cawnpore road, then threatened by Beni Madhoo. There we were joined by the Sikh Rajah of Kuppertola in the Punjaub, and it was determined to transfer this duty to him. When he paid Sir Hope his formal visit of ceremony, a salute was fired in his honour. He was not prepared for this compliment, and his fat figure bounded off his chair when the first gun was fired, for he thought we were attacked. When the matter was explained, he was much gratified, for all native princes attach much importance to such honours.

## THIEF CATCHING IN INDIA

This rajah was a nice young fellow and sincerely anxious to serve the State. He spoke and wrote English well, was very rich and much bejewelled when he paid his visit. Some months afterwards, when we were suffering much in camp from professional thieves, he quite calmly and seriously advised Sir Hope, the most humane of men, to adopt the method by which he said his father had rid his camp of these pests many years before. The father succeeded, he said, after much difficulty in catching in a trap set for the purpose one of these thieves who had followed his camp for weeks and had stolen heavily from it. He had him profusely anointed with sulphur and brimstone, and then set fire to him, every one in camp being obliged to watch the burning operation. He said, with a curious grunt of satisfaction, that they were never annoyed by thieves after that.

When the hot weather with its burning winds had set in, Sir Hope Grant found it necessary to restrict his military expeditions from Lucknow. No British infantry could march through Oudh in such heat without great loss from sunstroke and heat apoplexy. But we had a Chief Commissioner living in a very comfortable house, whose head was never exposed to the piercing sun, whilst every luxury that a great salary could provide helped to keep his quarters cool and his body in good health. But not so the British foot soldier. His life was a very hard one at this time, and this Chief Commissioner would have had Sir Hope Grant make it harder. Long service in India had taught Sir Hope to dread the power of the highly placed civilian administrator to ruin any general's reputation. But he was not a man to be induced by any such personal consideration to unduly expose his soldiers during the hot months.

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

army collapsed and made no further effort to oppose us.

The streets of Koomasse presented an odd appearance for some time after we entered, for they swarmed with armed Ashantees, who greeted every Englishman they met with "Thank you," the only English words they knew. I gave orders they should be treated kindly but not allowed to enter the buildings told off for the troops. It was getting late, so we had not much time to settle down well that night in our new quarters, but all of us were in houses. Big fires blazed in front of these temporary barracks, at which sat our soldiers and sailors discussing the day's events as they satisfied their hunger and quaffed hot tea.

Strict orders were issued against looting, but they were not very strictly obeyed by the Fantee carriers or by those Fantees whom we had found fastened to logs when we arrived.

We had some extensive fires in the city that night, which I attribute to the carelessness of those Fantee pillagers. This annoyed me much, but having no plans of the place, and as it was a very dark night, I could do nothing to prevent them until daybreak. I managed, however, to send a message to the King, offering to make peace and warning him of the consequences unless he did so. The house I occupied as my headquarters was not very uncomfortable, and was fairly clean inside; it had a very high-pitched roof of thatch, which, however, was not in the best repair.

I had issued a proclamation that men caught robbing would be hanged, and the police patrolled the city all through the night. One of our own Fantee police caught in the act of pillaging was hanged, and several camp-followers were flogged. On the chance of being able to treat with the King,

## IN KOOMASSEE

I did not wish him to think that I had wantonly burnt his capital.

The following morning, February 5, 1874, I issued a general order thanking the soldiers and sailors of all ranks in the Queen's name for their gallant services and their good conduct.

I sent off all my sick and wounded under a strong escort bound for Cape Coast Castle and thence for home. The sooner I could get the poor fellows into comfortable quarters on board ship the better, as the best restorative for the sick and wounded is the consciousness that each succeeding day finds them nearer home.

I again wrote to the King to warn him that I would destroy Koomassee unless he at once made a treaty upon the terms I had offered him.

During the day we had another downpour of very heavy rain. I felt the King would make no satisfactory peace and that to stay longer on the chance of his doing so would be to entail fevers and death upon many of the gallant men round me. In my heart I believed that the absolute destruction of Koomassee with its great palace, the wonder of Western Africa, would be a much more striking and effective end to the war than any paper treaty—no matter what might be its provisions—that I might possibly obtain from this brutal and deceitful monarch. But public opinion at home would have loudly condemned me had I had recourse to that extreme measure until, having done my best to make terms with King Koffee, I had absolutely failed to induce him to agree to a treaty of a nature that would be generally approved of. As a concession to what I believed to be the drift of English feeling, I had done my best to induce this Ashantee savage to make peace on reasonable terms,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

and in doing so I had treated him as if he were a rational being. But with this rainy season already upon us, I felt it would be to tempt Providence were I to keep my soldiers any longer in such a charnel house as Koomassee.

I visited the royal palace and was surprised to find it though not imposing in character yet well laid out, clean and fairly well kept. Some of its buildings were of substantial masonry, and most of it was solidly constructed and admirably roofed in. Its ornamentation, without and within, was decidedly Moorish in style. The Ashantees have long had much intercourse with the Mahometan tribes further north, who draw their prescribed notions of civilization, of learning, and of art from Morocco. Many of the amulets worn by the Ashantees round the arm, or fastened to a necklace, contain verses from the Koran in Persian characters. At our prize sale in Cape Coast Castle I had had bought for me a curious black leather hat that had been worn by King Koffee. It was one of the many valuable hats brought away by the prize agents from the royal wardrobe. Around it are many talismans, in gold and silver casing, each of which contains a Mohammedan precept.

The palace abounded with curious and most beautiful gold ornaments which in pattern and design were peculiar to the country. All were made from very pure gold of a deep rich and reddish yellow that I have never seen elsewhere. But if the native goldsmith's skill surprised and interested me from an artistic point of view how can I describe the horrors which sickened mind and body in the palace. The whole locality stank from the human blood with which it may be said the ground is saturated. I have been in many barbarous lands where man's life is held cheap, but here alone was the spot where men made in the

## PLACE OF EXECUTION

image of their Maker were butchered daily in cold blood in hundreds to appease the manes of some cruel ancestor or in obedience to the mandate of some bloodthirsty fetish priest. There was a grove of trees hard by into which the murdered bodies were always thrown, the stench from which poisoned the surrounding atmosphere. Hating all horrors I did not venture into it, but others with stronger stomachs did so, and their descriptions of it made one sick.

Without doubt the most loathsome object my eyes have ever rested on was a sacred stool saturated with human blood, which stood near the place of execution, and which was always kept wet with the blood of victims. Great fresh clots upon it showed how recently some poor creature had been sacrificed there. Near it stood the huge "Death Drum," some four or five feet in diameter, and decorated round its outer rim with human skulls and thigh bones.

Koomassee was well situated on rather high ground rising from the deep and wide swamps that encircle it. Its streets were wide and straight and it contained a large number of fine, well built, well kept houses. All were of but one story, with floors of red brick raised some two or three feet above the surrounding level. The lower part of the outside walls was painted in yellow ochre and decorated with an arabesque pattern of a reddish brown colour.

For Captains Glover, Butler and Dalrymple I felt the deepest sympathy. All three had done everything possible to get near Koomassee about the date I occupied it.

The very heavy rain that fell during the day caused me to think seriously over our position, so far away from my base on the coast and in a country where provisions for the white man are unobtainable. The rainy season had set in earlier than usual, and I knew how flooded the river Ordah had

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

already become. Many of the swamps we had crossed with comparative ease in the fine weather during our advance would soon be converted by such equatorial tornadoes as that we had just had into impassable quagmires. I could clearly see that although King Koffee was thoroughly frightened for his own safety and for the maintenance of his kingdom, he was not to be easily hurried into signing any formal treaty of peace. He must naturally have felt the extreme danger of his position. He knew that besides my little army of white men in his front there were three other forces led by British officers in the field against him. That of Captain Glover—about 2,000 natives and Houssas—at Odumassee on the Anoom River and only about twenty-four miles east of Koomassee; that of Captain Butler, who had advanced from the Prah near Amantea by a road about half way between Captain Glover's line of march and that of the main army; and lastly, that under Captain Dalrymple which was advancing through the Wassah country by a route about twelve miles westward of that by which I had marched on Koomassee. This great array of nominally fighting forces must have impressed King Koffee and his counsellors, although, with the exception of the Houssas with Captain Glover, the whole lot added little to my effective strength. They served, however, to reduce the hordes of armed men that at first lay between me and Koomassee.

King Koffee was evidently at his wits' end, not knowing what to do, nor where to turn for useful advice. Had I felt there was the least likelihood of being able, by staying a week longer at Koomassee, to obtain a better treaty I would not have quitted it on February 6. But I felt that I should not be justified in condemning my soldiers



## PRIZE AGENTS

to the risk of any longer stay in such a pestiferous climate on the off chance that it might enable us to get better terms inserted in any paper treaty King Koffee might consent to. I consequently determined to quit that horrible city of blood the following morning. I named prize agents to collect all the gold and valuable articles they could during the night, and ordered the commanding Royal Engineer to mine the palace and make arrangements for setting fire to the city in several places to ensure its total destruction.

We had a succession of violent tornadoes during the night accompanied with sheets of rain which poured in freely through the roof under which I slept. I tried to keep myself dry under an umbrella, but failed and lost my rest in the effort.

We began our return march to the coast at 7 a.m. on February 6. The road was in a pitiable condition, but all ranks were too full of delight at having left Koomassee behind them, with all its foul smells and loathsome horrors, to think of so small a matter. It was a real joy to feel that every step took us nearer home. What were mud, marshes, heavy tropical rains and deep streams to men "going home"? And yet one of the swamps we crossed reached to the armpits! Upon leaving Koomassee I had hoped that the whole force might have reached Aggemmamamu that day, but I was delayed in crossing the Ordah River where I found my bridge submerged and with two and a half feet of water running rapidly over it. Only tall men could ford the river, keeping their mouths above the water. I sent the Naval Brigade over the bridge, the superstructure of which became more rickety every moment. It seemed to be touch-and-go whether it would last till night. More than half the Rifle Brigade and all the Black Watch had to ford, their

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

clothes being taken over on the heads of natives. Having seen all across I pushed on with a small escort and reached Aggemmamumu just before nightfall.

We had a bad night of heavy rain. The Black Watch, the Rifle Brigade, and the Artillery marched in and halted there the following day, whilst the Welsh Fusiliers and the Naval Brigade went on to spend the night at Amoaful. Not a shot was fired during the day. I spent it writing home, and at 5 p.m. my A.D.C., Captain the Hon. Henry Wood, started for England with despatches for the Government.

One thought banished all other reflections as we saw him leave camp that evening for home: "Will the Queen be satisfied with what her soldiers and sailors have accomplished in the trying campaign just finished?"

As those at home discuss some military achievement described in the morning papers few realize how much the soldiers or sailors concerned hang upon the question, "What will they say in England?"

The despatch I then sent home ended thus:—"In the despatch which I addressed to you on October 13 last, asking for English troops to be sent out to enable me to accomplish my mission, I stated that that mission, to ensure a lasting peace with the Ashantee kingdom, could only be fulfilled in one way—by defeating the Ashantee army, by pursuing it if necessary to the capital of the Ashantee kingdom, and by thus showing to the King and all those chiefs who urged him on to war that the arm of Her Majesty is powerful to punish her enemies, even in the very heart of their own country. That mission I conceive I have now fulfilled by the aid of the troops which Her Majesty's Government confided to me for its accomplishment. Yet

## HEAVY LOSSES FROM THE SUN

condition of the "Ghora Log" whom he saw with that outlying picquet upon the road?

Before we were fairly formed up and had started, the division had already suffered heavily in men disabled by heat apoplexy, of which many subsequently died.

Sir Hope Grant had passed all his life in the cavalry, and did not realize how much the foot soldier, laden with rifle, bayonet, accoutrements and sixty rounds of ball ammunition, suffers when marched in extreme heat. He consequently adopted a formation to advance in which in temperate zones, and when not exposed to any serious artillery fire, is a very convenient one to deploy from into line of battle. I mean a line of quarter columns at deploying intervals. But in the great heat and dust of that season of the year it was an extremely unwise formation. His mind was apparently so full of the question from a tactical point of view that having had little experience with infantry, he overlooked all other considerations. The result was a most disastrous march, during which the men in the centres of these quarter columns absolutely stifled from want of air and the dense dust they inhaled, fell out by dozens, whilst the enemy's cavalry, sweeping round our flanks, fell upon our dhoolies, already filled with soldiers in every phase of sunstroke. I regret to say the enemy's sowars killed many of them, decapitating several as they lay in an unconscious state. When at last we got at the enemy the usual process took place; we charged and took about a dozen of their guns. They seemed to know that they could no more stand against our men, than our men could stand the heat. We kept driving them before us, not calculating that the sun was already near the horizon. The cooler the day became the more we revived to our work,

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

begged of me to allow them to transfer their allegiance to our Queen.

In the evening of that same day a messenger came into Fommanah to announce that King Koffee's envoy was in a village close at hand with the gold I had demanded and ready to make peace. I desired the envoy to come into my camp at daybreak. That same evening I received a telegram from Cape Coast Castle informing me that Mr. Gladstone and his Government had resigned office. This startling news made a great impression upon most of us.

The Harmattan wind had now been blowing for some time, so that although the days were still hot the nights had become actually cold.

A few days later the King's envoys arrived with 1,040 ozs. of gold: they said the King could not collect the 5,000 ozs. I had demanded. Of course this was untrue, but we had so completely smashed up the Ashantee power that, as far as England was concerned it mattered very little whether we obtained all the gold I had demanded or only a fifth of it, as long as we secured peace on her West African frontiers, as we had done by the practical destruction of the only native power that could have seriously disturbed it in future.

Two days later we reached Prahsu, where I went round the hospitals, in which we still had 105 patients, most of them wounded men. Alas! the doctors told me that two of them must die. Such is war: but the soldier whose turn has not yet come consoles himself with the trite saw that "all must die some time or other." Most of us, however, have ambitions or some aims in life and do not wish to die before they have been won. In passing, may I ask when is it that any one in his heart believes he has fully achieved

## RETURN TO CAPE COAST CASTLE

those ends? Before reaching the sea I overtook another convoy of sick and wounded *en route* for England. The worst cases it had started with, had died already. Two of them were naval officers who had died the day before. One was a fine young fellow who had been so badly hit in the head at Amoaful that I did not then think he would have lived so long.

I reached Cape Coast Castle on February 19, and had an extraordinary reception by its curiously excitable Fantee inhabitants. The whole population were in the streets, and half wild with passionate delight, the women shouting themselves hoarse, and throwing themselves in heaps on the ground before me. It was a strange sight, full of colour in every sense, for all ranks were decked in the brightest and gaudiest of tints. But no hue is ever too brilliant for the shiny black face of the negro girl.

Amidst the excitement of this "triumphal" entry, the sad reflection recurred to me continually, that of all the staff I had landed with, or who had subsequently joined to fill vacancies, only one marched with me that day to Government House, my military secretary, Captain, now the able and distinguished General, Sir Henry Brackenbury.

The troops began to embark according as they reached Cape Coast Castle. Among our transports we had a very fine hospital ship, and I never saw the sick and wounded in any war more comfortable or better looked after than those were on board of her. Lord Cardwell neglected nothing that forethought could provide for. He was indeed a great War Minister.

On March 4, 1874, I embarked with all my staff on board the *Manitoba*, bound for Portsmouth. My one regret in bidding good-bye for ever to the Gold Coast was, that it

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

meant leaving behind me the most helpful of colleagues, the best of comrades, I mean Commodore, afterwards Admiral, Sir William Hewett. He was truly a man in a million.

During the Ashantee campaign the Army and Navy had worked most cordially together in every way and upon all occasions. It can be truthfully asserted that the State, for which both Army and Navy exist, never suffered in the least through any jealousy whatever between these two services. Whatever I asked Captain Freemantle, and subsequently Commodore Hewett, to do for the troops, was done without a moment's hesitation and with an alacrity on the part of all ranks that nothing could exceed. I often said to the latter officer in fun that had I asked him to haul up his flag-ship by road to Koomassee, he would have tried to do so. No two men ever worked as loyal comrades together with greater cordiality and in more absolute harmony than did Sir William Hewett and I. He was the bravest of brave men, an officer of boundless resource and the staunchest of friends. Our soldiers delighted in him, and his cheery manner in action was to me worth an extra battalion. I shall never see his like again on sea or land. He has gone before me to that unknown land, the other world. But surely there must be a United Service Club there where old Army and Navy men may meet to talk over the wars by land and sea in which they fought their best, and often suffered much for Queen and country.

From the Ashantees I learnt one important lesson, namely, that any virile race can become paramount in its own region of the world if it possesses the courage, the constancy of purpose and the self-sacrifice to resolve that it will live under a stern system of Spartan military discipline, ruthlessly

## OUR RETURN VOYAGE

enforced by one lord and master, the King. In other words, if it be clearly recognized by any people that the interests and comfort of the individual, whether he be king or subject, should not be the first object of national solicitude, but rather that it should be the greatness and power of the state as a whole, a greatness which brings with it national pride, individual security and also contentment, that nation will rule over its neighbours. Learn from the bees how the hive is governed : their system is based upon this principle, and with what regularity and success it is followed in those industrious yet brave and fighting communities.

The Ashantee and the Fantee were absolutely of the same race. The former were a proud nation of brave and daring soldiers, living happily and contentedly under the most absolute of kings. The latter, who lived and idled under the licence of our easy-going laws, were cowardly, lazy, good-for-nothing vagabonds, with all the vices of the Ashantee but with none of his manly courage.

I don't preach as an apostle of military despotism : I merely wish to point out that it has its good as well as its bad sides ; and that in some cases it supplies the nation brave enough to adopt it with a renown that makes life worth living and worth fighting for.

Our voyage home was uneventful. Many old friends came to meet me at Portsmouth, where I was received with much flattering honour by the ships of war, etc., etc. When travelling to London, I asked my staunch friend, Colonel Sydney North, who was beside me, if there was any news in town. He said no, but correcting himself in a moment, he said, " Oh, we have had a big fire there." Not being much interested, I said in a very conventional tone, " Where ? " to which he replied, " Oh ! only the Panttechnicon." " The

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

devil," I said quickly, at once intensely interested in the matter. "All my goods and chattels were stored there, and they were not even insured." But no insurance money could replace them, for amongst other things that I regretted extremely were old family papers, reminiscences of my boyhood, and old letters, my Burmese, Crimean, Indian and Red River journals, and also all my books were gone. The last named I could replace, but my journals, the daily record of my campaigning and exciting life, I should see no more. I felt this loss at the time, and I still regret it deeply. What would I not now give even for the elaborate log I kept during my nearly four months' voyage from the Thames to the Hooghly when I was a boy ensign, even then a great reader of military history and of all books on the soldiers' arts and sciences.

The late Queen reviewed in Windsor Park the British troops who had taken part in the campaign, and on the ground presented me with my new orders of knighthood. The review was in a beautiful part of the park, the weather was fine, and it was very largely attended. So ended the most horrible war I ever took part in.



## CHAPTER L

### Our Habitual Unpreparedness for War

WHEN I look back upon all whom I have known in public life, I am constrained to admit that only a few possessed the combination of mental and physical qualities that are required by a great commander in the field. I have met scores of brave men who performed the ordinary routine of regimental and brigade work most creditably, but who were yet absolutely unfit for any high or even for any independent command. At the time I write of, few soldiers concentrated whatever may have been their thinking power upon the science of war. The British officer then was commonly accounted well read and instructed in his profession if he had mastered even the art of war, whilst most of us were content with a thorough knowledge of the evolutions described in the official drill books. The State held out no inducement to her officers to study anything not contained therein. Very few at that time had any ambition beyond regimental promotion, and fewer still were those who possessed imagination. And yet, without that great gift only a very inferior order of ambition in any walk of life can be satisfied, and certainly without it no one can ever become a renowned leader of armies. How largely it was possessed by Moses, Xenophon, Hannibal, Caesar, Turenne, Marlborough, Napoleon and Wellington! It is said to rule the world, and we are told that the chief

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

difference between the successful and the unsuccessful in most high positions is the possession of it by the former and the want of it in the latter. And yet, whilst imagination may convert into a poet the man of poor physique, it would not of itself make an able general of him. He who aspires to lead soldiers in war should be not only a thorough master of the soldier's science, but he must possess a healthy strength of body, an iron nerve, calm determination, and be instinct with that electric power which causes men to follow the leader who possesses it, as readily, as surely, as iron filings do the magnet. The great thinker may possibly be blind or halt or lame, and even wanting in personal courage, and yet leave behind him a far more lasting mark upon the history of the world than all the fighting men by land and sea who were his contemporaries. But a man with such physical defects could never have been converted into a great leader of men. All this means that whilst no one can be a great general who lacks the inestimable gift of imagination, yet not all the imagination of a Milton will of itself alone enable any one to be great in war.

It is the necessity for this rare, this exceptional combination of mental gifts with untiring physical power and stern resolution that accounts for the fact that the truly great commander is rare indeed amongst God's creations.

Some are inclined to scoff at the great national advantages said to follow upon inherited traditions of fighting prowess. But can any people inherit what is more inspiring as a sentiment, more advantageous as an actual possession? The strong man armed is always respected as an individual, and with a nation the reputation of her sons for manly strength and daring cannot fail to be a great national asset.

The unimaginative may profess to scoff at martial renown

## ENGLAND THE UNREADY NATION

because it does not necessarily bring with it either wealth or commercial prosperity. It may be, as it is with us at times, relied upon to a dangerous extent, for reflection warns us that even during profound peace it is nationally dangerous to habitually ignore the necessity of being strong in fact, as well as by repute. This is specially the case when your frontiers are not duly protected from the serious attacks of warlike neighbours. It matters little whether the rulers of such States be autocrats or democratic Cabinets, for whatever be their form of Government they may at any moment become the most dangerous of enemies, and to ignore this possibility is no mark of statesmanship nor of wisdom in any form. Besides our great and splendid fleet we require for national defence a highly trained standing army supported by great reserves of trained soldiers always ready to take the field with every necessary warlike appliance. And this we can never have without some form of compulsory military service. The nation in such a condition of military and naval strength can almost always count upon being able to avoid war, whilst the nation unprepared for war must always be at the mercy of any neighbouring bully. We are never ready for war, and yet we never have a Cabinet that would dare to tell the people this truth. Our absolute unreadiness for war is known to all our thoughtful soldiers, and without any doubt all the details which go to make up the fact are duly recorded and docketed in the War Office of every European nation. But these secrets (!) are studiously kept from our people by those whom we elect to govern us. When under the pressure of impending danger one Government purchases the munitions and stores that war would require, the next Administration, when the war clouds have cleared away, uses these stores to supply the

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

ordinary wants of peace, and are thus able to save a corresponding amount upon their Army votes for one or more years to come. The ignorant public, finding the War Office demands for money correspondingly reduced, rejoice because they have at last been blessed with an economical set of Ministers! Those who during peace contemplate the possibility of war are regarded in no favourable light by the professional politician in office. In the midst of peace, plenty, and prosperity, it is not pleasant to the easy-going to be reminded that it is only the actually strong nation that can always command peace.

Running through the character of all the best soldiers I have known in our Army, there is the love of national glory. The man who chases glory through the world solely from greed of personal renown, may be the bravest of the brave and the ablest of generals, but his is not the character the good man respects and the patriot reveres. As a national characteristic, pure love of glory has often been the spur that pushed forward some of God's greatest agents in our world. It has in all ages prompted men to noble and heroic actions. It is an invaluable asset of national greatness, and where it is not to be found, the State, be it large or small, resembles the lighthouse whose lamps, though possibly of the best pattern, are without any illuminating medium. Glory is no firework that, mounting high, is brilliant for a moment and then splutters and fizzles as it tumbles back to earth. True glory shines like a fixed star in the heavens of nations really great. It is begotten of honour and courage, and it cannot long exist when they have disappeared. So effective, so powerful for good is glory amongst all high-spirited peoples, that it seems to raise the moral character of those who can justly lay claim to it.

## A NATION WITHOUT GLORY

Those who in youth learn to value it as a holy possession are, as life goes on, inspired by its influence. It becomes eventually a sort of national religion and a veritable and powerful force in the character of a people. From this force springs the national ambition that makes all grades, the old and young, to wish their State to grow strong and powerful, and which instils an admiration for those doughty, virtuous and noble deeds which adorn history and give birth to patriotism.

A nation without glory is like a man without courage, a woman without virtue. It takes the first place in our human estimate of national fame. All States long for it, and certainly it is a big factor in that consciousness of national strength which commands the respect of both friends and enemies. It is a national heirloom of priceless value to the people to whom the world accord it and who are ready to fight rather than risk its loss. When the nation to whom it was once universally conceded begins to sneer at it as unimportant, and to ridicule its worth, the tide of that nation's greatness has surely turned : its manly vigour is on the wane, its moral fibre is deteriorating. If unchecked in this downward movement that nation will soon pass into the boneless, sinewless condition of the jellyfish, drifting with every tide and current, and will then cease to share in the direction of the world's great affairs.

Glory to a nation is what sunlight is to all human beings. Without it the State dwindles in size and grows weak in strength, as the man in a dark dungeon becomes daily whiter, until at last his whiteness passes into the colourlessness of death.

The noble courage that has its origin in love of country and sense of duty is not confined to the well-born ; it is to be equally found in the uneducated private soldier. What

## THE STORY OF A SOLDIER'S LIFE

can be finer than his love of regiment, his devotion to its reputation, and his determination to protect its honour! To him "The Regiment" is mother, sister and mistress. That its fame may live and flourish he is prepared to risk all and to die without a murmur. What earthly cause calls forth greater enthusiasm? It is a high, an admirable phase of patriotism, for, to the soldier, his regiment is his country.

Keep your hands off the regiment, ye iconoclastic civilian officials who meddle and muddle in Army matters. Clever politicians you may be, but you are not soldiers and you do not understand them; they are not pawns on a chessboard. Leave the management of our fighting men to soldiers of experience in our British Army of old renown, and do not parody us by appearing in public decked for the nonce in a soldier's khaki coat. You might as well put your arm in a sling, or tie your head up in the bandage of some poor maimed soldier, to whom, when wounded and unable to earn a livelihood, your regulations allow a pension of sixpence a day!

I have now told the story of my early military career from Ensign to Major-General, and would here take leave of those who have read so far.

But should my narrative interest the general reader, it will be a pleasure to continue it to the date when I gladly bid good-bye to the War Office and ceased to be the nominal Commander-in-Chief of Her Majesty's Land Forces.

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